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ALL
NEW
STORIES

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They watched the rescue ship
come down, knowing what would
happen in a matter of seconds . . .

QUICK FREEZE

by Robert Silverberg

(author of "Godling, Go Home!")

It seemed simple enough; the jet-powered *Calypso* would land on this icebound planet and pick up the passengers and crew of the wrecked hyperliner. However, Captain Werner had forgotten a few elementary matters in the excitement.

ACCORDING to the ship's mass detectors, Valdon's Star lay dead ahead. In the fore cabin of the *Calypso*, Communications Tech Diem Mariksboorg tried to shut his ears to the angry, insistent shrill distress pulse coming from the Empire hyperliner that lay wrecked on Valdon's Star's lone planet.

Spectrometer analysis confirmed it. "We're here," he said. He turned to the *Calypso's* captain, Vroi Werner, who was running possible orbits throught the computer. "You ready for the pickup, Vroi?"

Werner nodded abstractedly. "I figure we'll make a jet landing, using the usual type orbit, and grab the survivors as quick as we can."

"And no salvage."

"Just people," Werner said; he be picked up the sheaf of notes

Mariksboorg had transcribed from the distress message, read them again, and laid them down. "There are twelve survivors. With a little shoe-horning, Diem, we can just about get twelve more aboard the *Calypso*."

Mariksboorg peered at the growing bright image in the viewscreen, frowning moodily. "We'd be back snug on Gorbrough now if we hadn't taken this cockeyed route. Whoever heard of a jetship making an emergency pickup?"

"We happened to be right where we were needed at just the right time," Werner said stiffly. "There's a time element involved in this, Diem. It turns out to be more efficient to use an inefficient old jet-powered tub to make the pickup than the shiniest new warpship...for the efficient reason that we're already here."

"Aye, aye, sir," the chastened tech replied.

VALDON'S star was actually a triple system, consisting of a small, Sol-type main-sequence sun; a gray ghost companion sun, bulky and lifeless—a monstrous rarefied cinder and nothing more—and one unnamed planet, orbiting around the gray companion.

The Empire hyperliner *Andromeda* had been bound for the Deneb system out of Terra when something—a fused ultrone in the main generator, perhaps, or a cadmium damper inserted askew—went out of kilter, upsetting the delicate balance of the hyperdrive. Result: the liner was restored to normal space, and deposited abruptly on the frozen surface of Valdon's Star's solitary world.

A wrecked hyperliner is a thoroughly helpless object; the Bohling Hyperdrive is too complex for any journeyman engineer to repair, or even understand; with a conked-out drive, a hyperliner becomes—permanently—just so much junk.

To compensate for this, Galactic law requires that two automatic-break circuits be built into the cybernetic governors of all hyperdrive ships, in case of drive failure. The first of these is an instantaneous molecular disruptor that can, and will, volatilize the ship's every milligram of mass immediately upon emergence from hyperspace within critical range of what is defined as a Stress Area. That is to say, the interior of a planet—or, more alarmingly, the interior of a sun, where a sudden materialization could precipitate a nova.

A Bohling-drive ship gone sour *can* materialize anywhere at all—but if it returned to space at some point already occupied by matter, the result would be spectacular. Just thirty-seven feet saved the *Andromeda* from a Circuit One volatilization: it was thirty-seven feet above the surface

of Valdon's World at the moment of materialization.

From this height, the liner dropped to the surface, cracking open like a split log. Twelve of the fifty-eight persons within survived, getting into their thermal suits before the ship's atmosphere could rush from their bulkheaded compartment.

CIRCUIT two then went automatically into effect: as distress-pulse, audible over a range of twenty light-years, fanned on a wide-band, thirty-megacycle carrier to any and all craft in the vicinity. In this case, the wide range proved excessive.

The *Calypso*, and eight-man cargo ship, was traversing a minus-C orbit between two of the local stars; it happened to be only a half-hour's journey from Valdon's World when the distress-pulse exploded all over that segment of space. No other ship was within a light-year of the scene of the accident.

Central Control instantly checked with the *Calypso*; eleven seconds later, Captain Werner and his ship were willynilly bound for Valdon's World on a top-emergency rescue mission.

Which was how the *Calypso*, its tail-jets blazing with atomic fury, came to roar down on the blue-white airless ball of ice and frozen methane that was Valdon's World. The operation had to be carried out with utmost rapidity; Captain Werner had never landed on a methane planet before, but this was no time for maiden shyness.

Thermocouple readings showed a mean temperature of minus three-thirty F.; an abnormal albedo of 0.8 was recorded, and explained when spectroanalysis revealed a surface consisting of a frozen methane-ammonia atmosphere, covered with an icecarbon dioxide overlay. A sonic probe from turnover point indicated a heavy rock shelf beneath the frozen atmosphere.

Aboard the *Calypso*, the crew of

eight prepared efficiently for the landing and readied the cabins for the twelve newcomers who would be jammed aboard. Captain Werner studied the fuel banks, running hasty computations that assured him that the ship would still be stocked with sufficient fuel to handle the altered mass.

At eight minutes before planetfall, everything was checked out. Weiner slumped back in his deceleration cradle, smiled grimly, flicked a glance at Mariksboorg.

"Here we come," Mariksboorg murmured, as the *Calypso* swung downward, and the mirror-bright surface of Valdon's World rose to meet the jetcraft.

"HERE THEY come," muttered Hideki Yatagawa, Commander of the former Terran hyperliner *Andromeda*. He folded his arms around his stomach and stamped his feet in mock reaction to the planet's numbing cold. Actually, it was somewhat more than mockery: the thermal suit kept him at a cozy 68°F. despite the minus three-thirty around him. But the thermal suits would register *Overload* in eight or nine hours; within seconds after that happened, Commander Yatagawa would be dead, his blood frozen to thin red pencils in his veins.

"Is that the rescue ship?" asked Dorvain Helmut, of Kollimun, former First Officer of the late *Andromeda* and sole non-Terran among the survivors. "By Klesh, it's a jet!"

"They probably were closer to us than any warp-drive vessels when the distress signal went out," suggested Colin Talbridge, ambassador-designate from the Court of St. James's to the Free World of Deneb VII. "There's some sort of time element in this, isn't there?"

"There is," Yatagawa said. "These suits can't fight this sort of temperature indefinitely."

"It's a good thing the rescuers are here, then," said Talbridge.

The Commander turned away. "Yes," he said in a muffled voice. "But they're not here yet."

"Look at those jets!" Dorvain Helmut exclaimed, in frank admiration. Jetships were all but obsolete in the Kollimun system; Helmut was accustomed, to dealing with fuelless warpships, and the torrent of flame pouring from the tail of the *Calypso* aroused his connoisseur's love of the antique and the outmoded.

"Indeed," Commander Yatagawa remarked sourly. "Look at those jets. Look at them!"

THOSE JETS, at the moment, were bathing the planet below with fire. Hot tongues of flame licked down, beating against the thick carpet of ice and frozen CO² that, along with a heavy swath of methane and ammonia, made up the surface of Valdon's World.

Yatagawa watched, arms folded, as the *Calypso* came down. "I wonder if they've bothered with thermocouple readings," he said softly as the spaceship dropped.

"What do you mean?" Talbridge asked.

The rest of the *Andromeda* survivors were rushing from the wrecked ship now, running out into the icy plateau where Yatagawa, Helmut, and Talbridge had been standing. Quietly, Yatagawa said to Talbridge: "You don't think they're going to be able to rescue us, do you?" He sounded quietly resigned.

Hotly, Talbridge said: "Why not? Are you keeping something back from us, Commander? If you are—"

"I'm merely postponing the inevitable. The people on that ship think they're coming down to rescue us—but I'm afraid it may have to be the other way round."

"What do you mean?"

"Watch," Yatagawa said.

The *Calypso's* jets continued to blast down. The ship would be landing on

an upswept, ice-covered shelf which was about a mile from the wrecked hyperliner. Already, the approaching jetwash had begun to melt the ice beneath; a dark spreading stain over the gleaming surface indicated the area being weakened.

Talbridge gasped. "You mean they're not going to be able to land?"

"It's much worse than that," Yatagawa said with a calmness that belied his words. "They'll make a perfect landing. But I wonder how deep the ice is over there."

"Won't the jets melt it?"

"The jets will vaporize the ice in the direct blast, and liquify whatever's tangential to the area. Only—"

There was no need for Yatagawa to continue the explanation. Talbridge could plainly see what was happening.

The *Calypso* hung for a moment on the bright pillar of its jetwash, then lowered itself to ground. Talbridge saw the tailfins hang for a fraction of an instant, an inch above the swirling cloud of vapor.

Then the *Calypso*, cutting its jets, entered the pit the jets had blasted. The slim sleek vessel came to rest finally on the rock shelf beneath the ice-sheath.

"Look!" Talbridge yelled.

There was no need for Yatagawa to look. He had seen it coming since the jet had made its appearance—and had known there was no way to prevent it from happening.

In a temperature of minus three-thirty, melted ice refreezes instantly upon melting, give or take a few microseconds. A few microseconds had been all that was necessary. No sooner had the *Calypso* settled in its pit than an unexpected vise of frozen liquid clamped back around it. The water created by the jets had refrozen the instant the jets had been cut off.

Perhaps the crew of the *Calypso* had expected the water to stay liquid indefinitely; perhaps they had fully ex-

pected to set down in a small lake. Perhaps they had thought their jets would *not* melt the ice sheath. Perhaps—and this seemed most likely to Yatagawa, Talbridge, and the other horrified onlookers from the *Andromeda*—they had not thought at all.

It hardly mattered now. Conjectures were unimportant; facts remained. And the fact was that the hundred-foot length of the *Calypso* was now almost entirely under ice, frozen in an unbreakable grip, having slid into the temporary lake as easily as a blade into clay... a clay that hardened within microseconds.

Only the snout of the rescue ship was visible above the flat icy wastes, sticking out like a periscope from an ocean's waves.

Talbridge gasped. Yatagawa merely frowned unhappily. None of the twelve could evaluate the immediate situation of too clearly, but all could see one indisputable verity: the rescue ship was trapped.

YATAGAWA, moving quickly on his short, wiry legs, got there first, closely followed by the other eleven. He paused, testing the ice, before approaching the ship itself.

The ice held; it was solid. Very solid. The shortlived lake had refrozen into a clear sheet of ice that nestled snug against the ship. The ice displaced by the bulk of the *Calypso* fanned out around it in all directions.

Yatagawa climbed out over the ice and looked down. Visible just a few feet below the transparent surface was a single port; and staring upward out of the window was the face of a sad-looking jetman.

Yatagawa waved to him; the man waved back, then tapped the port with an expression of gloomy desperation on his face. A second man appeared behind him, and the two peered upward through the ice like animals in a cage—which, in a sense, they were.

Yatagawa gestured at the throat of

his thermal suit, indicating the suit-radio, and after a few moments of that, one of the men inside caught the idea and donned a pickup.

"Welcome to our shores," the Commander said dryly, when contact was established. "It was a beautiful landing."

"Thanks," said the mournful voice from beneath the ice. "Of all the stupid, harebrained, needleheaded—"

"No time for recriminations now," Yatagawa said. "We'll have to get you out in a hurry. I'm Yatagawa, the *Andromeda's* Commander."

"Werner, Captain of the *Calypto*—and the biggest fool unbung."

"Please, Captain. Who could expect you to prognosticate such an unlikely event?"

"You're just being kind, Commander—but thanks, anyway. I never dealt with one of these snowball planets before. I guess I should have known the ice wouldn't stay melted more than an instant, but I never figured I'd get frozen in like this."

A little more forcefully, Yatagawa said, "There is little time for discussion, Captain Werner."

"Just how little, Commander?"

Yatagawa smiled sadly. "I estimate our thermal suits will short out within eight hours, with a possible margin of thirty minutes."

"Then we'll have to move fast," Werner said. His face, clearly visible despite the feet of clear ice that covered it, was red with embarrassment. "But—how?"

HELMOT said, "I've sent Sacher and Foyml back to the *Andromeda* for picks and shovels. We've got a lot of digging to do."

Yatagawa's sad look remained. He said indulgently, "Dorvain, just how long do you think it will take twelve men to dig a hundred-foot hole in solid ice?"

The Kollimuni was silent a moment.

Then, in a hollow-sounding voice, he said, "It'll take...days, maybe."

"Yes," Yatagawa said.

"You sure of that?" Werner asked.

"We can always try it," said Talbridge.

"Very well," the Commander said. Sacher and Foyml arrived bearing picks; Yatagawa, stepping back, indicated that they should go to work.

The picks rose and fell. Over the audio network linking the suits came the sound of rhythmical grunting. Yatagawa allowed the demonstration to continue for exactly two minutes.

In that time, the two crewmen had succeeded in digging a cavity four inches deep and six inches broad. A little heap of powdered ice lay to one side.

"Whooping, Yatagawa inserted a gloved hand to measure the depth. "At this rate," he said, "it would take centuries."

"Then what are we going to do?" Helmot asked.

"A very good question." The Commander kicked the little heap of ice away, and shrugged. Even under the bulk of the thermal suit, the shrug was eloquent.

ABOARD the *Calypto*, Captain Werner and Communications Tech Mariksboorg regarded each other bleakly. A thin beam of light trickled through the blanket of ice, through the side scuttle port, and into the cabin. It was light from the yellow Sol-type companion star; unfortunately, it afforded little warmth.

"Minus three-thirty outside," Werner said. "And we knew it."

"Easy, Captain." Mariksboorg was sincerely worried that Werner's contriteness would prove fatal. He wondered how Yatagawa, up there, might react had he done what Werner had. Certainly two thousand years ago Yatagawa would immediately have disembowelled himself. Hara-kiri was

is obsolete, but Werner seemed to be considering it quite seriously.

"Whoever heard of a spaceship getting icebound? Werner demanded.

"It's over, Vroi. Forget about it!"

"Easy enough, forgetting; but we're still stuck here. And how can I forget, when I don't even dare leave my cabin and face my own crewmen?"

"The boys aren't angry," Mariksboorg insisted. "They're all very sorry it happened."

"Sorry!" Werner wheeled and jabbed an index finger sharply in the Communications Tech's direction. "What good is being sorry? This is serious. Die; we're trapped."

"We'll get out," Mariksboorg said soothingly.

"Yeah? Listen: if we're not out of here in eight hours, those twelve guys outside are going to freeze to death.

Their ship's got no air left, and they're damned sure isn't any on this accursed planet. Okay. So they die; too bad for them. *But who's going to get us out?*"

"Oh," Mariksboorg said in a small voice.

"By my figuring we've got four days' food. When Central Command asked us to make this pickup, they said they couldn't get another ship here in less than a week. That's not even counting the time it would take for another ship to find us once it got here—and we can't help it much in that department."

Mariksboorg moistened his lips. "I guess we'd better get out," he said. "Fast."

"Th-huh. Faster, even."

From outside came the crackling voice of Commander Yatagawa. "We've attempted to flip you out; it can't be done in time."

"Of course not," Werner said. "Nothing's going to work in time," he added under his breath.

"What's that?"

"Nothing," Werner said.

There came a pause. Then: "This

is Dorvain Helmut, the *Andromeda's* First Officer."

"Hello, Helmut."

"Our ship's still in pretty good order, unless you count the hole in the skin that let all the air out. Do you think we can make use of any of our equipment to get you free?"

"Got a hydraulic drill?"

We have no digging equipment whatever," Commander Yatagawa said crisply.

WERNER studied his fingertips for an instant. Above, anxious faces peered down at him—separated by a thin but durable plastic window, and a thick and equally durable window of ice.

"How about starting up your jets?" Talhridge suggested. "You could run them on low power—just enough to melt the ice around you and free the ship."

Werner smiled; it was pleasant to find a bigger fool than himself on the planet. "If we start the jets, it'll be like firing a pistol that's plugged at the business end. You know what happens?"

"The barrel would explode, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," Werner agreed. "Only in this case, the barrel happens to be us. Sorry, but we'd blow up the works if we fired the jets. Besides," he added, glad of the chance to show that he wasn't an utter fool, "Even if we did melt the ice, we'd have to have some way of pumping away the fluid around us before we could blast off. Do you have any sort of pump?"

"A small one. It might do the job, but I doubt it."

"Couldn't you," Talhridge offered undismayed, "heat the inside of the ship? You could get into thermal suits and turn the heating-system way up. That ought to heat the hull and—"

"No," Werner said; "the hull wouldn't heat."



"Hold it," Commander Yata-gawa interrupted suddenly. "How come? Suppose you *could* get the jets started—wouldn't they heat up the tail, at least?"

"No. How much do you know about jets?"

"Not too much," Yata-gawa admitted; "I'm pretty much a warp-ship man."

"The hull's a polymerized bonded-molecule plastic," Werner said. "It affords pretty near perfect inside-outside heat shielding. It keeps us from cooking when we pass through an atmosphere—and from freezing on places like this one."

"You mean even the jets are shielded, and the tail-assembly won't heat up when you're blasting, eh?"

"That's right."

Up above, Yata-gawa nodded inside his thermal suit. After a moment's silence the Commander said, "We'll be back in a little while, Werner; I think you've given me an idea."

"I hope so," Werner said fervently.

THE SHATTERED corpse of the hyperliner *Andromeda* lay on its side in a shallow depression on the ice. A furrowed gash ran the length of the ship, attesting to the force with which it had dropped to the ground.

Twelve figures gathered about the

ship, hulky in their cumbersome thermal-suits, moving with jerky rapidity. All around, blue-white snow wastes spread to the horizon. Here and there, an outcropping of rock gave evidence of the stone shelf that underlay the frozen atmosphere—and, a little further away, an even stranger outcropping thrust from the ice: the dull-green snout of the *Calypso*.

"Polymerized plastic hull," Yata-gawa repeated, half to himself. "That means—if no heat gets conducted from inside to outside—"

"It ought to work the other way too," Helmot completed.

"Exactly"

Yata-gawa mounted one fir of the *Andromeda* and clambered inside, followed by his First Officer. Together, they headed down the narrow companionway.

Bodies lay scattered randomly in the hulk. The bacterialess fridity of Valdon's World assured that they would remain preserved indefinitely; there was always time to hurry them later. More urgent affairs beckoned now.

Yata-gawa tapped an unbroken helium tank. "Could we use this? Helium ought to be liquid in this temperature."

"You mean . . . a superconductor? Damned if I know how."

Yata-gawa shrugged. "It was just an idea, anyway."

They kept going, past the passenger compartments, down the dropshaft to the drive room. To Yata-gawa's surprise, a tear quivered suddenly in his eye. He scowled irritably; a thermal suit did not come equipped with tear-wipers—furthermore, this sort of emotional display seemed excessive to him. Yet the sight of the maze of controls that once had governed his ship moved him.

"Here we are," he said somewhat harshly. He looked around. "Pity there's no time to explore the place and figure out what went wrong."

"There'll be time for that later," Helmut said. "They'll work it out during the inquiry."

"Of course." Yatagawa shut his eyes for a second, thinking of the gruelling inquiry that was sure to follow, if he ever got off *Valdon's World*. Then he picked up a heavy spool of copper wire and handed it to the Kollimuni.

Helmut grabbed the spool and staggered with it back to the bulkhead door. Yatagawa, continuing to prowl through the shattered drive-room, hauled forth another spool, and a third.

"There's three thousand feet," he said. "That enough?"

"Better get a'other one," Helmut advised. "We won't want to set up our generator too close to the *Calypto*."

"Right."

He reached into a strange-hold and yanked forth another spool. "That should do it," he said. He glanced at the chronometer set in the wrist of his thermal suit. "Seven hours left. We should just about make it. I hope Werner was right about his hull; if he wasn't he'll be cooked for sure."

"CAN YOU see what they're doing?" Werner asked.

Marikshoorg craned his neck to try to peer through the port. "They're wrapping wire around the nose of the ship. I guess they're covering the entire exposed area with it."

Werner paced the cabin gloomily. The light of the yellow primary was fading, and time was moving along quickly. The men of the *Andromeda* had but a few hours in which to spring the trap.

"Here we are," he said bitterly. "We're the rescuers, and they're the rescued—and they're breaking *their* necks to save *us*!"

From outside, came Yatagawa's voice. "Werner?"

"What are you guys up to?" Werner demanded.

"We've wrapped a coil of wire

around the snout of your ship. It's hooked to an ultronic generator we've salvaged from the *Andromeda*. Can you see it from where you are?"

"No. I can't see anything."

"We're a few thousand feet from the ship. The generator's a medium-sized one, because the big one's gone dead. But this one will do; it'll give us ten million volts in a pinch. Not that we'll need that much, of course."

"Hey, hold on, Yatagawa! What are you going to do?"

"We're going to roast your hull. I figure that if we generate enough heat in the wire, your hull will heat up and the ice'll melt around you."

Werner gasped. "What about us? We're inside."

"The heat won't get above a thousand centigrade. Your hull can handle that—and you won't feel a thing, I hope. You have thermal suits?"

"Yes," Werner said hoarsely.

"I'd suggest you put them on; just in case, that is."

"Sure. Just in case."

"I'll wait for your signal before we send the current through. Meantime—"

Struck by a sudden idea Werner asked, "What are you going to do with the melted ice? It's only going to freeze again as soon as the current's off. My hull's not a heat-retainer."

"We've thought of that. We've dug up our small pump and some tubing. As the stuff liquefies, we're going to siphon it off down the hill."

"And what happens then?"

"We'll get into the ship and leave," Yatagawa said.

"How? You won't be able to get a bridge across the ice—and our airlock's pretty far down the hull."

There was silence at the other end for a moment. "There must be some way—"

Werner frowned thoughtfully. "We're on bed-rock right now, aren't we?"

"Yes."

"It's simple, then, but pretty screw-ball. Clear away about a thirty-foot diameter of ice and we should settle into an upright position on the rock below. We'll blast off the usual way; then we'll come back, and swing into a narrow orbit about thirty feet off the ground. We can drop ropes for you from our airlock. It's a crazy way to make a pickup from a spaceship, but it's worth a try. Otherwise, I'm afraid, there'll be some trouble."

COMMANDER YATAGAWA stood by the hooded bulk of the ultronic generator, leaning affectionately against it, and stared at the gleaming red-brown wires stretching over the ice to the buried *Calypso*.

The yellow sun was setting; its dying rays illuminated the useless bulk of the gray ghost which was its neighbor, hanging low on the horizon and blotting out a great chunk of sky.

"We're ready," came the tense, tiny voice of Werner.

"So are we," Yatagawa said.

He threw the switch. The generator throbbed, and began shooting current through the copper wire. Electrons flowed; power was dissipated; electrical energy was transformed into heat.

The heat spread through the highly conductive plastic jacket of the *Calypso*. The *Calypso's* hull began to grow warm.

"How's the weather in there?" Yatagawa asked.

"We're doing fine," Werner said.

"Glad to hear it. Your hull's temperature is probably well above zero now, and getting hotter."

The hot wires had already melted thin lines through the ice to the ship; vapor rose.

"It's starting to melt," Helmut called.

"Get the siphon working."

The pump they had found in the *Andromeda's* hold and dragged with such effort over the ice began to come

to life. It groaned under the burden, but started to function, hauling the newly-melted water away from the warming surface of the spaceship and through the siphon, spurring it down the side of the hill, where it froze instantly into a spire of fantastic shape.

"It's working," Yatagawa said, half to himself. "It's really working."

LATER—after the entire volume of water had been siphoned away, after the *Calypso* had grudgingly righted itself and settled on its landing fins on the rock shelf, standing strangely naked in a pit thirty feet across and a hundred deep, the rescue operation began.

Still later—after the *Calypso* had blasted off amid much roar of jets, and brief melting of additional ice; after the ship had levelled off and gone into its absurd orbit just above the frozen surface of Valdon's World; after the twelve survivors of the *Andromeda* had shinned up the ropes into the *Calypso's* airlock, the two captains came face-to-face:

Commander Yatagawa, who had lost his ship—and Captain Werner, who had lost his face.

Together, they peered out the viewport at the rapidly-retreating brightness of the Valdon's World. "I think I see it," Werner said.

"That dot over there? Maybe that is where we were, after all. That must be the pit."

"And that's the wreck to the *Andromeda*," Werner said. Suddenly, he began to laugh.

"The joke?" Yatagawa inquired.

"We've got to fill out reports on all this," said Werner. "And I've got to notify Central Control that the rescue's been effected."

"And what's so funny about that?"

Werner, red-faced, said: "Officially, I rescued you. Dammit, I'm going to get a medal for this!"

READIN' and WRITHIN'

Book Review by JAY TYLER

IN SEARCH OF WONDER, by Damon Knight, Advent: Publishers, 1956. (3508 N. Sheffield, Chicago 13, Ill.) 165 pp plus bibliography and index. \$4.00.

The word, criticism, comes from the Greek "criticos", and means, literally, "skilled judgment"; it has no corollary meaning of either "constructive" or "destructive" judgment, the outcries of anguished artists—and outraged partisans of artists—to the contrary. And what science fiction has needed, has been just this one thing: criticism, skilled judgment.

The want has been partly made up by Damon Knight, whose criticisms first began to appear in magazines around the end of 1950, in *Worlds Beyond*, then later, and more regularly in such publications as *Science Fiction Adventures* (the early, not current magazine bearing that title), *Future Science Fiction*, *Science Fiction stories*, *Infinity*, and *Science Fiction Quarterly*. Two things have made this possible—first, comprehension and close reading on the part of the critic himself; second—the willingness of a few editors to cooperate, which meant giving the critic a free hand, and ample space in which to operate. You just cannot get worthwhile criticism in the tiny slot usually allowed to "reviews" in magazines; at best, you get acute critical epigrams, meaningful only to those who have read enough of the particular critic's expanded analyses elsewhere to know just how many ideas and essays his shorthand comments cover.

The present book is a collection of Knight's essays, arranged in such an order as to give a lucid and thorough examination of science fiction and the

practices of science fiction's authors and producers, over the course of the last decades.

What are the prerequisites for this kind of skilled judgment we call literary criticism? The ability to read, and know what one has read, sounds so obvious that you may wonder why I mention it. I have to mention it, because so much alleged "criticism" that I have seen has demonstrated either that (a) the "critic" in question did not have the ability, or (b) the "critic" must have encountered a special edition of the item in question, sent to him alone for the express purpose of making him look like an utter ass—it certainly could not have been the book that the rest of us read. Since I doubt that any publisher makes up special one-copy editions, the first explanation seems to be the right one. In other words, the critic reports upon, and gives skilled judgment upon, what there is in the book, rather than a fantasy about the book, spun out of his own imagination.

Even the best critic may misread at times, or his personal prejudices may lead him to see something which really isn't there. In a recent address (as reported in Madle's "Inside Science Fiction", elsewhere in this issue), Sam Moskowitz showed skilled judgement when he illustrated the influences upon Ray Bradbury's style. On the other hand, he showed momentary inability to know what he had read when he alleged that Damon Knight, in this book, had stated that Bradbury's stylistic influences came from Christopher Morley, Robert Nathan, and J. D. Salinger. The names of the three authors appear on page 79 of "In Search of

[Turn To Page 76]

NAME YOUR TIGER

by Milton Lesser

(author of "Social Climber")

Novelet of Tomorrow's Frontier

The beast, whatever it was, appeared to human beings as an embodiment of what each most feared. Which meant that each person's secret terror was exposed, among other things . . .



What had Martha Plunket seen when the thing came?

IT WAS THE last thing they ever expected to happen on the planet Mars. Or anywhere else, for that matter.

Martha Plunket, sowing a hearty strain of winter wheat in the irrigated acres of the Plunket homestead, saw the red and white striped tiger come loping across the dry canal hed toward the settlement. Martha had never seen a tiger before, but she said this tiger looked hungry.

Amos McQuade, who read wild west stories for diversion, was almost run down by the hand of painted Indians galloping their spotted ponies across the ochre wasteland toward the settlement.

For Hans Grubek, who had come to Mars from the Belgian Congo, it was a herd of trumpeting elephants.

Willis Sloper agreed on elephants, but insisted they were pink. Since Sloper was the settlement drunkard, no one paid much attention.

Most everyone agreed that *something* had been seen.

Whatever Nora Albright had seen in her final moments, however, must always remain a matter of conjecture. Vern Hogue was able to reconstruct the scene of the tragedy up to a point. Nora Albright had been drawing wa-

ter from the spring at the head of the winter-dry canal when something had come up behind her, knocked the water bucket from her hand, and carried her off. You could see signs of a struggle in the sand and you could follow the blood trail clear across the head of the dry canal and up the twenty foot embankment on the far side. There, it turned left and skirted the edge of the embankment for a quarter of a mile before it cut perpendicularly away from the canal and out across the ochre wilderness.

Following the trail, Vern Hogue knew he would have had news for the Alhright family, since the amount of blood was an indication of Nora's fate. It was not until mid-afternoon that Vern Hogue found Nora's signet ring, a few scraps of blood-soaked clothing, and three small white bones. The animal—for surely it was an animal which had carried off the girl and made a meal of her—was nowhere in sight.

Hogue fought down the sick feeling in his stomach. Hours before, Nora Alhright had been a young girl who had come with her family to the planet Mars, here in the final years of the twentieth century to meet the challenge of mankind's new frontier in space. Now? Now was the animal that had abruptly terminated her life sunning itself contentedly on the sand somewhere nearby? Vern Hogue thumbed open the chamber of his rifle again and slammed the bolt home cleanly. Then he was prowling around the sand in slowly widening circles.

There was a faint spoor close to where the animal had eaten, but he quickly lost it in the ochre sand. Late afternoon winds were stirring up a dust storm on the western horizon, and if Hogue wanted to reach the settlement by sunset, he would have to hurry. He kicked sand over the shreds of clothing and the three white bones, pocketed Nora Alhright's signet ring,

slung the rifle over his shoulder, and headed back toward the settlement.

The few track marks he had seen were those of a Kodiak bear.

"A TIGER," said Sam Plunket next morning in the mayor's office. "My Martha's a level-headed woman. If she says it was a tiger, you can bet it was a tiger."

"I saw it plain," said Martha, "before I ran."

Amos McQuade shook his bald head. "Don't tell me I didn't see no Indian riding hell-bent toward the settlement here. I know what I seen."

"Indians," Mayor Spurgess guffawed. "Really, McQuade."

"Elephants," someone said.

"Boa constrictors."

"I thought I heard a jet plane."

"A tank, you mean."

"Wild man. Like that abominable snowman thing back in the Himalaya Mountains on Earth."

"Bird the size of three eagles."

"But I tell you, I saw this here thing. Bug eyed monster, with tentacles."

"Does it matter?" Morley Alhright asked in a voice lacking all expression. "Our Nora is dead; does it matter what did it?"

Vern Hogue stood up and crushed out his cigaret. "It matters, Mr. Alhright. We'll have to get that thing, whatever it was, before it can strike again."

Mayor Spurgess nodded. "Until yesterday, the largest animal ever seen on Mars was a desert rodent the size of a field mouse. Now we know there's something deadly out there on the desert, ready to stalk us and strike if we're not careful. For that reason, I'm turning over my authority to Captain Hogue until he tells us the crisis is past."

"Hogue doesn't know how to run a settlement colony," someone said. "What does he know about planting and harvesting? Could he settle our

disputes? Could he give Pamela Fleming an order and make it stick?"

The bachelors in the room chuckled at that remark, and it broke some of the tension. It was no secret that they all had their caps set for Pamela Fleming—a sultry, willful beauty who had fled the Video circuits on Earth six months ago, for some unknown reason, and had taken the semi-annual rocket to Mars.

"Neither could I," said Mayor Spurgess, who was one of the bachelors. "So what?"

Hogue wasn't smiling. He said, "Let me tell you something. I picked up some kind of a spoor out there on the desert yesterday. I'm a soldier and a hunter by profession, so you ought to be able to place some faith in my judgment."

"That's right," Mayor Spurgess said.

"Well, I don't. The tracks I saw looked like Kodiak bear."

"Kodiak bear?"

"That's right, the largest carnivorous animal back on Earth. A full grown Kodiak can outweigh a lion or tiger by several hundred pounds. And that's what I thought I saw out there."

AMOS McQUADE shook his head. "That's impossible, and you know it."

"So's a flock of Indians, and elephants, and tigers, and anything else; that's the point I'm trying to make. We're all intelligent people here. We all think we know what we saw. Listen to me, all of you. I've killed every kind of dangerous game back on Earth, except for Kodiak bear. Once, in Alaska, I set out with a party after one, but never got it. One of our Eskimo trackers was killed in the attempt, and we had to give it up. I think that's why I saw the footprints of a Kodiak bear."

Mayor Spurgess was frowning. "I'm not sure I follow you."

"Well, take Mr. McQuade. He

reads wild west stories and yesterday gets the daylight scared out of him by a flock of Indians on the warpath. You could say my nemesis is the Kodiak bear, so I see bear tracks; I'll bet Martha Plunket is more afraid of a tiger than anything else."

"You can say that again," Sam Plunket admitted. "Tiger once got loose in a traveling circus show back on Earth, and Martha's had nightmares about it ever since."

"In the Congo," Hans Grubek confirmed, "our plantation was once overrun by a herd of tuskers. My father was trampled and killed. I am afraid the thought of elephants has been fearsome to me always, and still is fearsome after all these years."

"O.K.," Hogue said. "We know this much; the animal looks like all things to all people. We don't know why. We only know it can single out your fears, as if it can read your mind, and shape itself accordingly. Maybe it's protective mimicry carried to its ultimate form. The animal doesn't hide, though; it turns your muscles to water with fright, then attacks."

"What can we do?" Mayor Spurgess demanded.

"Find it. Kill it. And protect the settlement meanwhile. We'll post half a dozen guards on a round-the-clock basis. Armed men, ready to shoot at anything, particularly at night. We'll have a sunset to sunrise curfew, as of tonight. We'll have a head-counting right after this meeting to make sure no one's strayed from the settlement. And," Hogue grinned mirthlessly, "we're going to learn about each other as no group of people ever did before. By tomorrow morning, I want a list of all your fears."

"Our fears?" said Mayor Spurgess.

"Uh-huh. Every man's most afraid of one particular thing. Let's air them out; let's get to know what we're afraid of. When the thing materializes before you, it's time to start running."

"Just a minute now, Captain

Hogue." It was Barrister, a farmer who owned a few acres at the southern end of the settlement. "That's all right for you to say; you're scared of teddy bears. Good for you. But some of us come to Mars for a new start in life on account of we had to run away from something. We ain't going to say what."

IN A WAY, Hogue knew, he couldn't blame Barrister. For many of the colonists, the Mars settlement paralleled the early days of Australia—which had been a penal colony, then later a place where criminals might go if they wanted to start life with a fresh slate. They had all had pantropic conditioning; now they were Martians. Still, only Hogue had seen what had happened to Nora Albright; and Hogue, arbitrarily placed in command of the settlement in case of emergency, had to make the decision. He sighed wearily. He had volunteered for Mars because he was frank enough to classify himself as a loner, but now his past experience had thrust upon him an authority he did not relish.

"I'm asking you," he told Barrister. "Please don't make a test case out of it."

"You want me to tell a lie? O.K., I'm scared of goldfish. Goldfish, that's what." And Barrister threw back his head to laugh. Other men smiled, then joined him in laughing. Hogue could feel the slight authority Mayor Spurgess' decision had given him slipping away.

"Cut it out," Hogue said. He didn't shout, but his voice quieted the room. The men moved back toward the walls uneasily, waiting to see what would happen. A big man with muscles bulging under his work shirt, Barrister stood his ground stubbornly.

"Goldfish," he said again.

"You're first," Hogue told him, still not raising his voice. "What are you afraid of? We're waiting for your answer."

"You're waiting, wise guy. Not the rest of them. They're willing to mind their own business."

"I'm waiting, then. Later on, this information might save someone's life. Your own, maybe. Start talking."

Barrister mouthed an obscenity.

They never understand, Hogue thought. People in authority often regret the necessity for it, but their duty is clear. He took two quick strides toward Barrister and sent him sprawling with one blow from his bared right fist.

"Damn you," Barrister swore, knuckling blood from his torn lips, but not trying to stand up yet. "I served a hitch in the Army once. You officers are all alike."

Then he came up swinging. Hogue ducked under his wild lunges and measured him carefully, then doubled the big man up with a hard left to the gut and spilled him once more with a right cross. Barrister wouldn't be the first to reveal the skeleton in his secret closet after all. Barrister was unconscious.

2

THEY COUNTED heads that night and found that the settlement's two-hundred fifty-four colonists were all where they belonged. Then, long after the small, pale Martian sun had set to the west across the desert and the cold winds came shrieking across the ochre wilderness to stir up miniature sandstorms around the clusters of pre-fabricated huts, it began.

Martha Plunket heard a tiger roaring hungrily across the dry canal.

For Hans Grubek, elephants trumpeted.

For several others, a lion coughed.

There were Indians and snakes, and a squadron of jet planes, and the angrily hissing waters of a storm-tossed ocean, and two-hundred-odd other

fears embodied in the unknown creature which prowled around the settlement again, because it had tasted human flesh once and liked it.

Hogue dressed quickly in boots, insulated trousers and an old mackinaw from his days in Alaska. He allowed himself the luxury of one puff from a cigaret; then he rammed a clip of ammo into the magazine of his rifle, and stepped outside into the thin Martian air and the keening night wind.

Half the night he spent looking for the Kodiak bear, which he occasionally heard uttering its unique growl from distances of two or three hundred yards. He hardly had time to wonder how big the thing really was, or how it was shaped. He knew every inch of ground in the settlement, bordered on three sides by desert and on the fourth by the canal bed which was dry now, except for the trickling spring at the north end of the settlement, but would bring clear polar cap water to the settlement in late spring and summer. He needed no light, and once he thought he saw something half a hundred yards ahead of him, vague and indistinct but silhouetted against the star-peppered sky. He slammed the bolt of his rifle forward, sliding a round of ammo from the magazine to the chamber. He stood upwind from what he saw and knew his voice would carry. He called softly, "Who is it?"

The vague shape moved on toward the canal, in no great hurry. Running now, Hogue leaned forward with the wind behind him and jammed the butt of the rifle against his shoulder, feeling the coolness of the stock against his cheek. The Kodiak bear—until he saw it, he could think of the animal as nothing but a Kodiak bear—had disappeared into the canal bed. Moments later, he saw it silhouetted briefly on the opposite embankment. He felt the rifle bucking against his shoulder and sent half the clip of ammo whining through the thin air across the canal, then scrambled down

the embankment, across the dry bed, and up the other side.

He found nothing, but heard the animal growling half an hour later, a mile across the desert. He shrugged and returned to his quarters for some sleep.

MAYOR SPURGESS and the others asked him about the rifle fire in the morning. Hogue went to where he thought he had seen the animal leaving the canal bed and searched the area for a blood spoor in case it had been wounded. There was nothing. He told them he had seen the animal and fired and missed it.

They counted heads again, calling the roll of the settlement as they would do twice each day, once in the morning and once immediately before the sun went down, turning the ochre desert blood red.

"Barrister is missing," the man in charge of bachelor quarters reported grimly.

The six night guards were questioned. They had heard Hogue's rifle fire but had seen nothing of Barrister. "Maybe you shot at him," Sam Plunket suggested.

But Hogue shook his head. "For me, that animal's a Kodiak bear; I know what a Kodiak bear sounds like."

Olga Dufree, a prim spinster who had been the housemother of a girl's dormitory in a college back on Earth and had secretly longed for adventure, and now had found it on Mars, handed Hogue the roll of unmarried women. There was a check-mark in the date column for every woman except Pamela Flemming. "No one's seen Pamela this morning," she said, then added, "It doesn't surprise me at all. She went off somewhere with that Barrister person. I might have known. Well, she'll have another assignation with the devil someday, that girl."

Mayor Spurgess smiled at Hogue, then said, "We're not interested in the possibilities of a scandal, Miss Dufree.

Barrister and Miss Flemming could be in serious trouble."

At that moment, a pretty girl whose name Hogue couldn't remember joined them and handed something to Olga Dufree. "Pam left this," she said, and waited while the house mother unfolded the sheet of paper and studied it.

"*'Dear Everybody,'*" she read, pausing here and there or raising her voice to convey the innuendo which was uppermost in her mind, "*'I know Captain Hogue and Mayor Spurgess will be furious when they read this, but I didn't come to Mars to be regimented and told when I could go out and when I couldn't, or to be psycho-analyzed by an ex-soldier and big game hunter, and neither did Mike Barrister. I have decided to go on a little trip with Mike until this nonsense blows over. We've taken a double ration of food for two weeks, which is exactly how long we expect to be gone. Please, Mr. Hogue—no, it's Captain Hogue, isn't it?—please don't come after us because really, you won't be able to find us. Anyway, you'll have to protect all the scardy cats back in the settlement, probably from their own shadows, Mike says. See you all soon.'*" It was signed, of course, *Pamela Flemming*.

"Naturally," said Olga Dufree, "she's right. You can't go after them, can you, Captain?"

HOGUE CONSIDERED it. His first duty was to the settlement, but Barrister, regardless of what Hogue thought of the man, was part of that settlement, and so was Pamela Flemming. Further investigation revealed they had taken one rifle and the few clips of ammo they could stuff into their pockets, but they were traveling light.

"I don't know," Hogue told Olga Dufree. "As long as you count heads day and night, and no one crosses the canal alone and unarmed, the settle-

ment is reasonably safe. But those two out there won't have a chance if the animal decides it's hungry again."

Mayor Spurgess scowled. "Then you'll have to explore all of Mars to find them. It's crazy, Hogue."

"I don't think so. They won't just go galavanting aimlessly across a few thousand square miles of desert, mayor; they probably have something in mind."

"Like what?"

"Well, like the ruins of a city the supply rocket spotted a few months ago on its way down to the settlement."

"But Barrister knew we were going to send an exploring party there next summer."

"And figured he could go there himself, now and win whatever glory with discovering dead cities. Also, he wanted no part of being told what to do here, which was suddenly necessary. Pamela must have thought the same thing."

"Or thought here was a chance to go off with a man," Olga Dufree said spitefully.

"I don't think that's the case," Hogue told her. "Pam Flemming's a kind of snotty, self-important kid who wants it known she's not only beautiful but also has guts. If Barrister challenged her to go along, she probably felt she had to accept."

"Just the same, we ought to make those two get married when they return, Captain Hogue."

"If they return," said the mayor.

"Keep posting guards," Hogue said. "No one steps outside at night, unless it's a matter of life and death. No one crosses the canal, unless he's in a party of three or more, with at least two of them armed and good shots—and then only in daylight. You can think about chopping up one of the pre-fabs and constructing a fence with it if you want."

"But we don't know how high we'll have to build it or how strong. We don't know what the animal is like."

"O.K., then you'll have to figure it

can stand as tall as a Kodiak bear on its hind legs and climb trees like a panther and run like a deer and—"

"—And roll over obstacles like a tank or fly like a jet plane," Mayor Spurgess finished for him. "It's no good, Hogue."

"**T**HEN DON'T build a fence; only use extreme caution in everything. When I return, with Barrister and Pamela Flemming or without them, it will be daylight. If anything approaches the settlement at night, instruct the guards to shoot it."

"Then you're going after them?"

"I have to; they're two human lives."

"And there are over two-hundred and fifty here," Olga Dufree reminded him.

"Out there, Barrister and Pamela Flemming are in constant danger. I think my course is clear."

"Just a minute." Mayor Spurgess placed his hand on Hogue's shoulder. "Barrister was ugly about it after your fight yesterday, mouthing off about how he was going to get you. He could have this thing planned, figuring how you'd go out looking for him. Maybe he's waiting out there to kill you."

Hogue snorted. "And Pamela Flemming too? Maybe I'm not exactly a lady's man, but I never thought I was that objectionable to the ladies. But seriously, Barrister is a blowhard; he probably didn't mean what he said. I've got to find them."

Hogue spent the next hour packing his gear. Enough food concentrates for ten days on the desert, minimum rations. A first aid kit. Two canteens of water, to be supplemented at the canal springs along the way. A soft, big-brimmed hat to protect him from the Martian sun which, although it was small and weak, beat down intolerably at noon through the thin Martian atmosphere. A sleeping bag. A high velocity rifle which could stop an elephant, a tiger, or a Kodiak bear. A cartridge belt and two bandoliers

which together could hold a couple of hundred rounds of ammo.

Mayor Spurgess, Sam Plunket and Hands Grubek walked with him as far as the canal. The air was cold but the sun was hot, a condition you had to grow accustomed to on Mars. The settlement was behind them, a small cluster of drab gray buildings with the United Nations flag rippling in the wind over it. Across the canal was the great ochre emptiness of the desert.

"When they asked Barrister what he feared most," Mayor Spurgess said, "he still told them goldfish."

"I guess I didn't knock any sense into him."

Mayor Spurgess smiled. "Pamela Flemming said it was you."

"Me?"

"Captain Vern Hogue was what she said. You think she was kidding too?"

"Search me," said Hogue, and waved to them as he made his way down the embankment. The adventure magazines didn't picture it this way at all, he thought with a wry grin. On Mars, they wrote of ray guns and plastic-domed cities and jet-copters which could wing over the desert and find Barrister and Pamela Flemming in an hour. Hogue waved again from the far side of the canal, then stood for a moment and watched Mayor Spurgess and the others trudging back toward the settlement. "It's best to shoot an elephant behind the shoulder," Hans Grubek called to him.

The real Mars was different. Like all frontiers in history, it slipped back a couple of centuries. It was one man, like Hogue, marching grimly across the ochre sand on foot. Twenty miles a day. Five days to the ruins of the Martian city which had been spotted by the supply rocket. One man armed with a rifle much like rifles which had been in use for a hundred years, even though it had taken the greatest achievement of the twentieth century, a spaceship, to get him there.

Mars, like all frontiers, was an ideal place for the loner. Hogue whistled cheerily as he made his way along in the sand.

3

AS THE sun went down on the second night, and Hogue sought shelter from the wind in a dry canal bed, he discovered a campfire. The embers were cold, but in the faint light that remained from the sun Hogue could see footprints where Barrister had prowled around the canal bed, seeking driftwood which had been carried down the ravine by last summer's canal water.

Quite clear in the sand around the site of the fire was the spoor of a Kodiak bear.

It was Hogue's first indication that the unknown Martian animal was trailing Barrister and Pamela Flemming. They had been in no great hurry, though, for Hogue could see how sand had been kicked over the embers of the fire to put them out. He could only conclude that the animal had been stalking them silently and they were not aware of it. He got his own fire going, then ate a can of beans. Here the canal spring had frozen over, but he hacked ice from it with the butt of his rifle, and made water over the fire in his canteen.

He crawled into his sleeping bag and thought he heard the roaring of a Kodiak bear far away across the desert.

In the morning, he found the spoor of the bear easy to follow and, assuming it was still trailing Barrister and Pamela Flemming, made excellent time. By mid-afternoon, he had not yet emerged from the canal bed, for the bear and its quarry had avoided the desert sun by remaining in the ravine's cool shadow.

Suddenly, Hogue stopped. He had heard nothing; but he was instantly

alert. Fifty feet ahead, the canal angled sharply to the right, circumventing some natural object—probably a bed of solid rock. Hogue had traversed such places twice before in the morning with complete confidence, but now that sixth sense which belongs to the professional hunter, and which had saved Hogue's life in at least three instances back on Earth, was working for him. He could not see beyond the bend in the canal. He sensed danger.

Warily, he climbed the embankment to his left and emerged into the searing noonday sun. He was being watched. He could feel it. Skirting the edge of the embankment, he followed the ninety degree turn which the canal bed excuted. He had removed the rifle sling from his shoulder and thumbed the weapon off safety, carrying it easily with the barrel resting on his left palm and the stock on his right.

His right foot slipped, sending a shower of sand down into the canal bed below.

THERE WAS a flurry of activity below, a darker shadow moving swiftly, a snapping of great jaws. Without any real target to aim at, Hogue fired twice and was rewarded with a loud bark of surprise and pain.

Recklessly, he plunged down the side of the embankment. He would have two or three seconds of advantage before the wounded animal's fear turned to rage. There was movement directly beneath him, then something large loomed out of the shadows and Hogue rolled over to avoid contact with it. The great bear lumbered away on all fours, gaining speed with every giant stride. Squatting on his haunches, Hogue aimed carefully at a spot immediately behind the bear's left front shoulder and slowly squeezed the trigger.

The rifle misfired.

Hogue swore softly and drew another bead, but by then the animal had raced up the embankment and dis-

appeared over its rim. Scrambling up after it, Hogue had time for one more shot. But his windage had been set at zero for the canal bed, and the sciff wind of the Martian desert carried the bullet too far to the left. Then the animal was gone.

For the remainder of the day, Hogue was able to follow a blood spoor. The animal had been waiting to ambush him and he had ambushed it instead, wounding it with his first shots. The wound had been superficial, though, for the animal was able to keep out of Hogue's sight, beyond the horizon.

It might still be stalking Barrister and Pamela Flemming, or it might be fleeing to its desert lair. Either way, Hogue's course was clear. He merely had to follow the animal. Grimly, he brushed sand from the trigger housing group of his rifle as he jogged forward. Wounded but not weakened, the animal would be more deadly than before.

LATE ON the afternoon of the fifth day, Hogue reached the ruins of the ancient Martian city. An age ago, the city had been built at the juncture of half a dozen canals, commanding the flow of life-giving water to the outlying regions which had now, unguessable years later, been reclaimed completely by the rusty sand of the desert.

The city itself had crumbled half to ruin. It seemed miraculous to Hogue that observers on the supply rocket had been able to see it at all, for the buildings were of ochre sandstone. They'd probably spotted it in early morning or late afternoon, he decided. They'd probably seen the long shadows. They'd probably...

Whan-ggg! A bullet ricocheted off the sandstone wall to Hogue's left. He heard the flat, cracking sound the rifle made in the thin Martian air as he was diving toward the ground.

They had fired at him from three or four hundred yards, he guessed. He

waited without moving, to bear the report of the rifle again.

"We know you're there, Captain Hogue," a voice called from somewhere deep within the silent sandstone structures of the city. A woman's voice. Pamela Flemming.

"Are you crazy?" he shouted back. "I'm here to help you."

Whan-ggg! Pamela Flemming answered him with another shot, which nicked the sandstone wall four feet above his head. Maybe he'd come out here for nothing, he thought with perverse humor. That girl knew how to handle a rifle.

SUDDENLY, he remembered what Mayor Spurgess had told him. Pamela Flemming had said the thing she feared most in life was Captain Vern Hogue. He had taken it for obvious sarcasm but now, incredibly, he wasn't sure.

"It's me," he shouted. "It's really Hogue, I wounded the animal and tracked it here to the city."

The rifle crashed again. This time there was no ricochet, which meant that Pamela Flemming had lost her original sighting and could only guess at his location now. "Damn it," he roared, "I am Hogue," and, crouching, sprinted forward as she answered him with another bullet.

"You've been saying that for five days," she shouted. He was closer now. A hundred and fifty yards, he guessed. Only the small red rim of the sun remained above the horizon.

Five days? Well, if the animal could growl like a Kodak bear for him and leave the spoor of a Kodiak bear, why couldn't it mime Hogue's speech for Pamela Flemming? Then the girl had been dead serious. For some unknown reason he, Vern Hogue, was her nemesis. Since he had hardly spoken three words to the girl in all the time they'd spent together in the settlement,

the idea should have been amusing to him. Under the circumstances, though, it was deadly.

He sprinted forward again, without drawing fire. He hunkered down behind an embankment of sandstone which once had been the wall of a building and called, "Listen, Miss Flemming. You're making a mistake. Is Barrister with you?"

"Yes." Less than a hundred yards, Hogue figured.

"All right, then. I'm going to stand up and show myself. If I'm the animal, Barrister won't see Vern Hogue. He'd see something else. Right?"

"Right."

"Will you hold your fire long enough for him to get a look at me?"

It was growing dark and the wind came knifing in off the desert behind him. In darkness he would be safe, but the animal, which had entered the city hours before him, might be able to see well enough at night to attack Barrister and Pamela Flemming.

"Yes," the girl finally said.

Hogue didn't know whether to believe her or not. If she were trigger-happy, she could hardly miss him at this range when he stood up. But he had come all this way to rescue them and with the animal this close, he had to take the risk.

He stood up.

There was a silence. All Hogue's senses were alert. He was ready to dive for the ground again if she didn't say something soon. He peered intently ahead through the gathering gloom but could see nothing except the ruins of the age-old city which, he supposed, were being leveled a grain at a time by the Martian wind. Apparently Pamela had found a high vantage point from which she could see without being seen herself.

Something growled fifty yards to his left, hidden from sight by the ruins of the city.

HOGUE CURSED and hit the dirt again, pulling the rifle off his shoulder and supporting himself on his elbows while he slid around to point the weapon in the direction of the sound.

"Oh, God." Pamela Flemming cried. "There are two of them now."

She was firing again, wildly now, emptying her clip of ammo without effect. Hogue thought he could hear the animal lumbering away, but wasn't sure. He climbed to his feet and ran toward the sound of her rifle, hoping she wouldn't have time to shove another clip into its magazine. He was so close now, he could hear the snick of the bolt.

"Stop where you are, Hogue!"

"Cut it out, Pam." Barrister's voice.

"That's Hogue all right; I can see him now."

Hogue sighed and slowed to a walk. "Where are you?" he said.

"Up here, Hogue."

His eyes followed sandstone steps to the roof of a building fifteen feet high. He saw Pamela's blonde hair and the barrel of a rifle. "I'm coming up," he said.

All the way up, the rifle followed him. When he reached the top, he saw a flat expanse of sandstone. Barrister was sitting in one corner, smoking a cigaret. Pamela Flemming, blonde and beautiful, backed away from Hogue warily, still pointing the rifle at him.

"Tell me what you see, Mike," she said. "Is it Hogue?"

"It's Hogue."

She lowered the rifle but said, "Don't come near me; please don't. I believe you. You're Hogue. But that thing out there has been after us for days now, using your voice and asking us to wait. I saw it a few times and it was you. It was you, Captain Hogue!" She wasn't far from hysteria, but Barrister looked even worse.

His lips were trembling and so were his hands. He could hardly get the cigaret in place to drag on it. "I wish

it were so simple for me," he said. "I wish I only saw Hogue out there. I wish I saw a Kodiak bear or any damn thing like that."

"What did you see?" Hogue asked gently.

"We should have stayed in the settlement," Barrister admitted bitterly. "I didn't know. How does a man know what his greatest fear is? His secret fear."

"Some people know," said Hogue, and smiled at Pamela. "You've got some explaining to do, miss."

She didn't meet his stare. "Some other time, maybe." Was she smiling? It was now too dark to tell.

"I know now," Barrister was mumbling. "I wish to God I didn't, but I know now. How does a man live with himself after he knows? Can you tell me that?"

4

OFF IN THE darkness, Hogue heard the Kodiak bear growling.

"It—its you again," Pamela said, looking at him. "You know what you're saying out there? You're saying, 'It's me. It's Hogue. What are you afraid of? You've got nothing to be afraid of. Can't I join you? That's what you're saying.'"

Hogue heard only the Kodiak hear, growling and probably licking its wounds. Both small Martian moons were in the sky, one showing a small, barely perceptible disk and the other merely a point of light no brighter than the green star which, Hogue knew, was Earth. It would be a bright night. A fine night for hunting—from the Kodiak bear's point of view, thought Hogue. Alone, he might go down there and chance it. With Pamela and Barrister, he could not.

Barrister was sobbing softly, so Hogue asked him, "Why don't you get it out in the open? What do you hear

out there, Barrister? I think you'll feel better if you tell us."

"Just shut up, Hogue. Don't bother me."

Hogue shrugged.

"He's been that way for five days," Pamela said. Insane with—well, I don't really know. Not fear. With worry. As if he suddenly realized something for the first time in his life and didn't know what to do about it. Hogue, listen; take my hand. I'm not flirting with you, silly. I just want you to hold on all night, that's all. This way, I know it's you. I couldn't sleep any other way, because then I might get to thinking it's that—that thing."

Her hand was warm and small and nestled comfortably in his while Barrister opened some canned stew, which they all ate cold. It was going to be cold on that roof before the night ended, Hogue knew. But up here the animal could attack from one direction only, so it was safer than remaining on the ground or inside one of the buildings, where they would be left in total darkness. Hogue smoked a cigaret until the ember burned his finger, then flipped it over the side. Pamela's hand had become cold.

"You're trembling," he said.

"It's freezing up here."

"We ought to climb into our sleeping bags."

"No please; I want to talk. Vern, I'm sorry for shooting at you before."

"I can understand why you did."

"I should have waited."

"What I don't understand, though, is why me? Why are you afraid of me?"

"You should see me. I'm glad it's dark. I'm blushing."

"I still don't get it, Pam."

"You men; you strong, silent types. You've always got to be pushed."

"Huh?"

"Nothing, damn you. Absolutely nothing at all."

"If you're angry with me, I want to know why."

"Shut up, please. I'm going to sleep."

He could see her silhouetted there, supple and lovely, as she unrolled her sleeping bag, took off her boots and got inside. He climbed into his own bag and smoked another cigaret. Barrister was still sitting off at one corner of the roof, making no move to turn in.

"Vern, are you up?"

"Umm."

"It's no secret why I came to Mars."

"Why tell me?"

"I just want you to know, that's all. I was a successful video actress. I didn't like them—the men; the phonies. The sharp, sophisticated phonies on Earth. It got so I was leary of all men, even though I—I'm blushing again, Vern."

"Go ahead, I'm listening."

"I'll hate myself in the morning. That's why I came here to Mars; to the frontier. But I'd squeezed myself into a rut. When I saw what I wanted, what I really wanted, I was afraid. 'He can't be real,' I told myself. 'He'll be like all the others once I get to know him. But if he's real...' Vern, I shouldn't talk like this. It's like being drunk, up here all alone in the cold, not knowing what will happen. It loosens your tongue. I'll bate myself."

Hogue was drifting off to sleep. Her voice was rich and mellow. She was amazingly frank, but he wasn't sure he understood all of it. Well, time enough in the morning...

IN THE MORNING, Barrister was gone.

Hogue awoke feeling numb with cold, despite the sleeping bag. He could hear an auto-thermo can of coffee hissing, unzipped his bag and turned over to see Pamela opening a tin of sausage to go with the coffee.

"Where did Mike go?" she asked him.

"Search me."

"Vern, I thought he must have awakened you during the night and told you. That's why I wasn't worried about

him. He's been acting so peculiar."

"You like the guy?"

"No, not particularly. I—I get the impression he doesn't like himself."

Hogue laced up his boots and downed the scalding coffee quickly. He flexed and unflexed his fingers until the numbness left them, then picked up his rifle and made sure it was loaded. The metal was so cold it almost stuck to his hands. "I'll have to find him," he said; "the animal is out there."

Pamela pointed to the other rifle. "He didn't even take it. He went down unarmed. Why, Vern? Why?"

"I don't know. I don't care. I've got to find him before it finds him."

"Please be careful. I want to finish what I was telling you."

"Don't worry about me. I can take care of myself. But you stay right here. Don't come down for anything."

"Vern, don't leave me here. When I see the animal, it's you. It's you!"

"You'll be safer here." *A hunter has to learn that the hard way, he thought. You hunt alone. If you don't hunt alone, you're looking for trouble. You stalk an animal and you have to protect whoever is with you, and you can't do both well at the same time.*

"It will come, and I'll think it's you. I'll let it come up here. Vern, don't leave me alone."

"When I come back I'll say 'finish what you were telling me.' If I say anything else but that, shoot to kill. You'll be safe."

"Maybe it can read minds."

Hogue shook his head. "We're wasting time. We—"

Just then, there was a scream off somewhere in the silent city. Barrister. He screamed again, a quarter of a mile off.

HOGUE PICKED up the second rifle and gave it to Pamela. "Here," he said. "Don't forget, 'finish what you were telling me.'" Then he

was running down the stairs without looking back.

He fired once in the air as he ran, in case there was a chance the animal hadn't finished Barrister yet. The sound of the rifle might possibly frighten it off. He heard a low growl ahead of him and kept moving. The animal might be lurking behind any one of the sandstone walls, ready to pounce on him in the shape of a Kodiak bear. But he had to take the chance.

He found Barrister lying on his back in a pool of blood which already was beginning to freeze on the cold ground. He could hear the bear growling close by, then the sound stopped. Barrister was still alive.

"I . . . I had to know," he whispered, so softly that Hogue had to crouch alongside him to hear the words. "I had to know why. I couldn't sleep . . . couldn't think of anything else. All his life a man gets to . . . think he's pretty hot stuff, then something . . . like this comes along." Barrister's features twisted with pain. Hogue could see the blood seeping copiously from the man's torn lumberjacket, where the animal's great jaws had closed above his left kidney. "What's a man . . . going to do, Hogue? After he finds out. Why couldn't it have been a Kodiak bear . . . for me?"

It was hopeless, Hogue saw. Barrister had lost far too much blood already. His face was white, his lips oddly green. He was going fast. "God," he whispered. "God, God, God. It was driving me crazy. I had to see it closer. I couldn't take the . . . rifle. God, oh God. It was me, Hogue. It was . . . me."

His head slumped. The greenish lips hung slackly, bloodless. The eyes stared at the pale Martian sky.

Hogue stood up quickly and listened. At first there was nothing, then he heard the Kodiak bear growling, off in the direction where he had left Pamela. He thumbed the bolt and peered into the chamber of his rifle

to make sure it was loaded, then started running.

The bear was still growling. And, all at once, Pamela was answering it. "You had me worried there for a minute," he could hear her voice. "Just saying 'I'm back.' I was waiting for you to say the other thing, like you just did. Vern, I was so afraid. I didn't know what to do. Come on up here, Vern. I'm blushing again; I want to tell you the rest of it."

He turned a corner and came in sight of them. Pamela standing atop the roof, clearly visible, unafraid. The Kodiak bear—for so it still seemed to him—half way up the flight of stairs and lumbering forward in no great hurry, the huge shoulders swinging from side to side.

"Pam!" he cried. "Pam, shoot it!"

She was beyond the bear, almost directly in the line of fire. He couldn't risk a shot himself, and now he saw her eyes, quite clearly at this distance, go wide with fright. She had just seen and heard what for her was the second Vern Hogue. She raised her rifle.

She said to the Kodiak bear, "Vern, it's behind you," and fired at Hogue.

The rifle was ripped from his hands as the slug creased its stock. He leaped after it, wondering if it would still fire. He got his hands on it and felt shards of sandstone knife into his face as Pamela's rifle roared again.

"Finish what you were telling me!" Hogue cried. "It's me, Vern."

He sprinted toward the stairs, not thirty yards away, watching the bear and the women. The rifle hung slackly in Pamela's hands now. "Both of them," she said, tonelessly. "They both said it." She dropped the rifle and stood there.

The bear had reached the roof and stood directly in front of her.

Hogue raised the rifle to his shoulder. He had to chance it. She made no move to flee. He prayed and squeezed the shot off with infinite care.

The Kodiak leaped erect on its hind legs, growling hideously.

"Vern," Pamela was saying. "Vern, what ..."

The Kodiak wheeled about on all fours again and, trailing blood down its right foreleg, sped toward Hogue. The huge head lifted and the mouth opened to emit another growl. Carefully, Hogue placed a bullet dead center in the chest.

The Kodiak bear lumbered forward and fell at his feet.

And changed.

It was a shapeless, slug-like thing with two trunk-thick legs and a gaping mouth, red with Barrister's blood. It was dead.

THEN PAMELA was in his arms and he hardly knew her but it was right. It was what she was trying to tell him. First, though, he had to get it out about Barrister. "He did things without thinking," he said. "Barrister. He fled from trouble all his life, but he was his own worst enemy; he's out there, dead."

"Vern, just keep on holding me."

He stroked her hair and walked with her away from the animal on the ground, avoiding the other slug, a quarter of a mile away, where Barrister lay. They walked, and the air was

cool and cleansing, and finally they could return, feeling better, for their packs.

"Finish what you were telling me," he said later, on the way back to the settlement.

"I hardly knew you, but I knew I'd always been looking for you. I was afraid it wouldn't work. That's why I jumped at the chance when Barrister wanted me to come out here with him. I had to get away from where I'd see you every day. I had to think. I love you, Vern."

The settlement would be safe from now on, he knew. With the fauna of Mars so limited, there couldn't be many of the miming slugs. Now that they knew its real proportions, they could build a fence.

On the third night of their journey back to the settlement, Hogue was sure. Out on the frontier, a man needed a wife. Even a loner. Out on the frontier, what might take months to happen back on Earth could happen in hours.

Preparing camp in a dry canal bed on the third night of their return from the ruins of the Martian city, Hogue threw away one of the two sleeping bags.



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CARDSHARP

by Donald Franson

(Author of "Comes The Revolution")

THE STRANGER brought out a smudgy, well-worn deck of cards and began mixing them.

"Now, just a minute," said West. He reached in his coat pocket and produced a new pack, began picking at the cellophane. "If you don't mind."

The card man looked up at him in surprise, then at Dr. Moselle, but said nothing. He sighed, put the ragged cards down, pulled open a drawer in front of him, tossed a pad and pencil on the table.

West began shuffling the slippery new deck, and Moselle protested. "You aren't being fair, West. The Rhine cards are scientifically designed for clear impressions. You're making it too hard on Mr. Radfield."

"I want to make it hard," said West, determined to be obstinate; "this is a test, isn't it?"

"But I wanted you to see—"

The card man, Mr. Radfield, interrupted. "It's all right, Doc; I can read them as well as the others. Makes no difference to me." He nodded to West. "Go ahead, turn the cards."

Dr. Moselle subsided, marvelling.

West, moving deliberately, placed the cards face down, cut them suspiciously, and picked up the top one, elaborately shielding it from the other man.

"Ace of Diamonds," said Radfield, quick as thought.

Moselle must have read the answer

in West's expression. "Was he right?" he asked triumphantly, pencil hovering.

"Yeah," said West, reaching for another card.

"Ten of Clubs," said Radfield.

"Right again," West submitted. *Try once more. The law of averages—*

"Ten of Clubs."

"You just said Ten of Clubs," admonished West, trying to throw doubt in the man's mind. But there was no doubt there, no explaining that he meant something else.

"I meant—no, it's the Ten of Clubs. You must have a pinochle deck."

West knew this now, but thought Radfield wasn't aware of it. He'd just bought the cards in the dime store before meeting Moselle and coming here, hadn't noticed it was a pinochle deck until now. He looked at Moselle's pad. "Are you keeping track? Three out of three. That's a pretty good average. Something fishy here."

Dr. Moselle laughed. "You doubting Thomases—you don't believe your own eyes. When I stumbled on this, I thought of you right away. I said to myself if I can convince West that this man is a telepath, I can convince anybody."

"You haven't convinced me yet," said West, with more stubbornness than conviction. He picked a card without looking, shut his eyes, held it up.

Radfield faltered. "Uh—how do I

know what the card is if you don't know?"

This stumped the investigator, and he opened his eyes. At once the man said, "Queen of Clubs."

"He doesn't claim clairvoyance," said Moselle. "He can read thoughts but can't see the cards except through your mind."

"That's right, Doc," affirmed Radfield. "There's some things that's the bunk, and that's one of them; I'm not X-Ray Superman. I catch thought waves from your mind. I can't call the cards if you don't see them."

"It's logical," Moselle put in. "Clairvoyance really has nothing to do with telepathy. It's mind-to-mind contact that we're after, not magic tricks with inert matter."

"Yeah." West's estimate of the mentalist rose a little. He always thought they ruined their case by claiming additional miracles, as if telepathy weren't enough of an accomplishment. He began to get a headache, and laid down the cards in front of Moselle. "Here, you try it."

WHILE DR. MOSELLE was enthusiastically receiving right answers, West walked slowly around the room, looking at the walls. "You're sure there's no mirror here?"

Radfield barked, "Ha. No mirror. Nine of Spades."

Moselle went merrily ahead with what West knew must be exhaustive tests, and the check marks increased, almost covered the pad. Still, at times the doctor looked puzzled. He switched to Rhine cards, then back to playing cards, sometimes drawing pictures on the pad, engrossed in the fascinating game.

West at last interrupted, "It's really a good demonstration, but I still have my doubts. Let's have some harder tests. I'll go outside the door, and—"

"Can't do it," said Radfield. "Brain waves can't go through wood; they

can't go through hardly anything. Or go very far either. They're real weak."

"Hey, I thought this Dr. Rhine had some kind of barrier—didn't he, Moselle?"

Radfield sneered. "Dr. Rhine don't get hundred percent answers like I get."

"Well, you've got a point there," admitted West. "How about if I sit across the table on *this* side of the room? Switch places?"

But Radfield was not fazed. "Okay." West began to wonder if he had mirrors on *both* walls.

"Never mind, don't get up," he said. "I'll sit here. Let's just hang a cloth on the wall in back of me—a couple of coats draped over those nails ought to do it."

Radfield shrugged, and Moselle was amused. West felt he was making himself look like a fool. His headache was getting worse, and he held his hand to his forehead while he drew the cards. With monotonous regularity, he continued to hear the right answers, Moselle no longer kept track.

Finally West turned to Moselle and said, "I've seen enough. Why don't we make it another night, and bring Jones here? He'd like to see this. Mr. Radfield must be tired. I've got a headache myself."

Dr. Moselle, smug; Mr. Radfield, perspiring; and West, sour, shook hands and said good-night.

In the car, Moselle said, "You know, while you were hunting around for mirrors like an idiot, I was making some valuable experiments in actual thought projection."

"I thought you looked puzzled for a moment," said West. "Did he guess one wrong?"

Moselle looked puzzled again. "No, that's the funny part. I tried an experiment. I looked at a card—it was the Ace of Clubs, I remember, and I deliberately thought, 'Ace of Diamonds', projecting my thoughts as hard as I

could. And, you know, *it didn't work*. He must have seen through to my inner mind, that *knew* it was the Ace of Clubs, and paid no attention to my conscious mind that was lying."

"Real lie-detector, eh?"

"Once afterward," continued Moselle as he drove, "I looked at a card carelessly, thinking of something else, and supposed it to be the Jack of Hearts. When he said, 'King of Hearts', I thought, 'Here's the exception that proves the rule.' I looked at the card again, and it *was* the King of Hearts. He knew it and I didn't."

"Hold on," said West. "That *proves* this guy's no more a mind reader than I am."

MOSELLE swerved in time to miss a truck. "What? He just called off what I saw, not what I thought I saw."

"And what you *thought* you saw is what you *thought*. To your mind, it *was* the Jack of Hearts, and if he was reading your mind, that's what he should have read."

"That *is* odd," admitted Moselle.

"I'll tell you what his method is, if you're ready to doubt; he did it with mirrors."

"Oh, don't say that. You looked all over, and didn't find a mirror."

"I did find a mirror," stated West. "In fact, two of them."

"But you hung coats over the wall. And he offered to change places with you."

"Yes, but he didn't want me to go outside the room, or put a curtain between us. I forgot to ask him if we could turn our backs to each other, but he would have had an answer for that. 'Mental rays only go out from the front of the brain', or something. Remember, when I picked a card with eyes closed, he wanted me to open my eyes and look at the card, so he could read my thoughts?"

"But that was logical," said Moselle. "He explained he wasn't a clairvoyant."

West continued, "When I started to get a headache, I had my hand on my forehead, just above my eyes. This seemed to slow him down sometimes, so I thought I'd try an experiment. I picked a card, and with my hand down over my eyes, sneaked a look at it. Then I shut my eyes and took my hand away. Mr. Radfield didn't say anything, though I knew what the card was. Then I opened my eyes and looked at the card, and he guessed it right away. I tried this three times. That was enough for me."

"I don't understand," said Moselle.

"There was a mirror after all," said West. "He was looking at the reflections in my eyes."

"Unbelievable!"

"In a way, yes; that guy must have phenomenal eyesight. He could be a circus performer on that ability alone, without the mental stuff. But it's just a matter of degree. You can read print reflected in your eyes, if you get close enough. Try it in a mirror, some time."

"Then that's the reason—"

"That explains why he saw what you saw, not what you were thinking."

West added, "It would have made it easier for him if we were wearing glasses. I don't know why he doesn't take up poker—maybe the gamblers won't have him."

"Well," said Moselle, "I'll have to admit—you were right, this time. We won't say anything to Jones about this. But it only proves *this* man's a fake, it doesn't prove *all* telepathy experiments are a fake."

"No, of course not," said West. "But it just shows there's sometimes an explanation you're not looking for. You have to look around for the things that are not obvious. Most people don't. That's how magicians make a living."

"They wouldn't make much out of you," commented Moselle.

"I guess not," said West. "I'm a man of positive doubts."



Now if you think that characters and incidents and stories just sort of ooze out of a writer's typewriter, then you ought to stop and consider

THE AUTHOR'S ORDEAL

by Isaac Asimov

(with apologies to Sir William Gilbert)

Plots, helter-skelter, teem within
your brain;
Plots, s. f. plots, devised with joy
and gladness;
Plots crowd your skull and stubbornly
remain,
Until you're driven into hopeless
madness.



When you're with your best girl,
and your mind's in a whirl, and you
don't hear a thing that she's say-
ing;

Or at Symphony Hall you are gone
past recall, and you can't tell a note
that they're playing;

Or you're driving a car, and have not
gone too far, when you find that
you've sped through a red light,
And on top of that, Lord! you have
side-swiped a Ford, and have broken
your one working headlight;

Or your boss slaps your back (having
made some smart crack) and you
stare at him, stupidly blinking;

Then you say something dumb, so
he's sure you're a crumb, and are
possibly given to drinking.



When events such as that have been
knocking you flat, do not blame
supernatural forces;

If you write s. f. tales, you'll be
knocked off your rails, just as sure
as the stars in their courses.

For your plot-making mind will stay
deaf, dumb and blind to the dull
facts of life that will hound you,

While the wonders of space have you
close in embrace, and the glory of
star-beams surround you.

You begin with a ship that is caught
on a skip into hyperspace en route
for Castor,

And has found to its cost that it
seems to be lost in a Galaxy like
ours, but vaster.

You're a little perplexed as to what
may come next and you make up a
series of creatures

Who are villains and liars, with such
evil desires, and with perfectly
horrible features.

Our brave heroes are faced with these
hordes and are placed in a terribly
crucial position,

For the enemy's bound (once our
Galaxy's found) that they'll beat
mankind into submission.



Now you must make it rough when
developing stuff so's to keep the
yarn pulsing with tension,
So the Earthmen are four (only four
and no more) while the numbers of
foes are past mention.

Our four heroes are caught and ac-
cordingly brought to the sneering,
tyrannical leaders.

"Where is Earth?" they demand, but
the men mutely stand with a cour-
age that pleases the readers.

But now, wait just a bit; let's see,
this isn't it, since you haven't pro-
vided a maiden,

Who is both good and pure (yet with
sexy allure) and with not many
clothes overlaiden.

She is part of the crew, and so she's captured, too, and is ogled by foes who are lustful;
There's desire in each eye, and there's a good reason why, for of beauty our girl has a bustful.



Just the same you go fast, till this section is passed, so the reader won't raise any ruction,
When recalling the foe are all reptiles, and so have no int'rest in human seduction.
Then they truss up the girl, and they make the whips swirl just in order to break Earthmen's silence,

And so that's when our men break their handcuffs, and then we are treated to scenes full of violence.
Every hero from Earth is a fighter from birth, and his fists are a match for a dozen,
And then just when this spot has been reached in your plot you come to with your mind all a-buzzin'.

You don't know where you are, or the site of your car, and your tie is askew, and you haven't a clue of the time of the day, or of what people say, or the fact that they stare at your socks (not a pair) and decide it's a fad, or else that you're mad, which is just a surmise from the gleam in your eyes, till at last they conclude from your general mood, you'll be mad from right now till you're hoary.

But the torture is done, and it's now for the fun, and the paper that's white, and the words that are right, for you've worked up a new s. f. story.

You won't call it a "Winter of Discontent" when you read

*A Powerful "Nova" type
Novel by* **CLIFFORD D. SIMAK**

WORLDS WITHOUT END

*A Moving Tale of Human
Dilemma by* **THOMAS
N. SCORTIA**

ONE SMALL ROOM

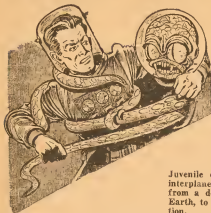
These lead off issue #31 of

**FUTURE
SCIENCE FICTION**

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LET'S HAVE FUN



"To most people,
all aliens are
slimy monsters."

Juvenile delinquency became an interplanetary problem when aliens from a dozen worlds gathered on Earth, to form a stellar confederation.

by L. Sprague de Camp

(author of "Wyvernhold")

DOC LOFTING was on another drunk in the recreation-room of the Embassy. This was different, being a crying drunk. The Fourth Secretary, Kemal Okmen, asked: "What's the matter, Doc?"

"Uzbezh dead," mumbled Lofting, a plump little man with a white goatee.

"The Provincial?"

"Yes."

"A friend of yours? I know you like these lizards—"

"Hadn't seen him in years."

"Then why the grief?"

"Reminds me..."

"Of what?"

Cecil Mpanza, the Communications Engineer, dropped into the third chair.

"It's his big secret."

"What secret?" asked Okmen.

"Whatever brought him to Abbia, twelve years ago; whatever made him stick despite heat, fog, and gravity. Whatever makes him do favors for the Ablians."

"Isn't it time you told?" said Okmen.

Doc stared at his glass. "Well, now Uzbezh's dead..."

"Well?"

"Buy me 'nother and I'll tell."

"I take refuge in Allah!" said Okmen. "Charlie! Give Doc another. Now talk, old boy."

Doc wiped away the tears. "How to begin... Won't matter now. Too far in..."

"In what?" said Okmen.

"Confederated Planets. This thing—this—well, what brought me here

—was back in twenty-seven, when the first Interplanetary Conference was held."

"The one in the U.S.—the one that set up the C.P.?" asked Mpanza.

"Yes. I was jush—just a general practitioner in the suburb of Far Hills, near the Conference." As Lofting proceeded, he seemed to get the knots out of his tongue. "You've read about it. The old problem: local independence versus unity. The Ansonians refused to attend, and are still outside the Confederation; the Ghazags sent an unofficial observer, and joined later; the Ahlians sent a delegation, but all tied up with restrictions."

Mpanza asked: "Is that why the Confederation's constitution is so weak?"

"Partly. Lot of other delegations, including our own, were under similar restrictions. Most intelligent organisms like to order outsiders around, but are horrified by the idea of being ordered in their turn."

"Now, the Ahlians were a special case. They were barely willing to consider any agreement; if they were pushed, they'd pull out. Those who wanted a strong union wanted Ahlia in. It's a rich and powerful planet, and the Ahlians have a lot of what we unscientifically call character."

"All the stuffy virtues," said Okmen. "Thrift, punctuality..."

BACK IN twenty-seven, five youths stood in front of the post office in Far Hills' small shopping center. In age, they ranged from fifteen to nineteen. All were decently dressed in shorts and T-shirts; all looked well-fed and well cared-for. But they scowled. They scowled because Mr. Patchik had ordered them out for making a disturbance. So they had left the delightful coolth of Patchik's Drug Store to stand in the dank ninety-degree heat.

Their speech must be abridged be-

cause it consisted largely of Anglo-Saxon monosyllables, used with wearisome repetition. Bowdlerized, it ran as follows. Meehan, the oldest, said: "Let's have fun."

"Such as?" asked Fisher.

"I know a place we can drive two hundred miles an hour."

"Nah, they got a cop watching it. That's how Buddy Garstein got spattered last month."

"I seen it," said Carmichael. "Funniest thing you ever saw, poor Buddy spattered all over the county, from trying to get away from that cop."

Snow said: "Some day I'm gonna get that buggy cop. If you tie a berculite wire across the road on a level with his neck—"

"Nah," said Meehan. "They're conch to that one; that's why they got that cutter-bar in front of their windshields. What else you spuds got in mind?"

"I know a couple of girls we could get to come out in Smathers Park," said Carmichael. "Tthere's a place low down with shrubbery around. If they yelled, nobody'd hear."

"Nah, I like mine willing," said Meehan. "How about a barn? Couple barns haven't been burned yet."

"Good idea," said Fisher. "I saw the Morrison barn get burned. Funniest thing you ever heard, way those horses screamed while they was roasted." Fisher giggled.

"Dunno," said Carmichael. "After these last fires, a lot of people are sitting out in their barns with shotguns. I got a better idea. You know old man Slye? He's got a marble statue in his garden—some kind of nymph or Venus or something. Old man Slye sure loves that statue. Well, let's bust it up: I can get a sledge-hammer."

"Hey," said Meehan. "Here comes Longpants Riegel with his tame lizard. One of those whatjacallems."

"Ahlians," said Kraus, the youngest.

The others gave Kraus a frosty stare; he had been guilty of knowledge.

"Like to get one of those huggy lizards," said Meehan. "Hang his head on my wall."

"You'd have a time," said Carmichael.

"Nah, with a good rifle? They wouldn't do nothing to me."

"How come they wouldn't?"

"They're not human, that's how come. The lizards."

"Maybe they got a closed season on 'em," said Kraus.

"So what? My old man would pay my fine. I'd just scream I was being frustrated. Some day we gotta give Longpants a visit."

"Yeah," said Snow. "Look at his huggy pants. And walking, in this weather; he's buggy, all right."

"Guess he's got to walk," said Kraus. "He couldn't get the lizard in his car. That lizard must be eight feet high."

"Playing around with off-earthars proves he's buggy," said Fisher.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR of Astromagnetics Horman Riegel was now within earshot, accompanied by Uzhegh of Kich. Uzhegh was the delegate to the Interplanetary Conference from the planet named by Terrans, after its human discoverer, Captain Hjalmar Ahl. The Ahlians called their own world Hwrajar—Pchum, but for obvious reasons earthmen preferred "Ahlia."

Riegel, dwarfed by his reptilian friend, had a few mildly-eccentric habits. For instance, he wore long trousers through the summer, instead of shorts, because he was conscious of his scrawny legs and varicose veins. He shaved the sides of his face in a decade when hurnsides were universal.

As he neared, the five began muttering like ventriloquists without moving their lips:

"Look at the mad scientist!"

"Watch out, he'll bite."

"Look at his buggy pants."

"Lizard-lover!"

"Oh, Professor! *Whee-Whee-ew!*" (Whistle.)

Riegel marched ahead, his face set. He had to shoulder his way between Meehan and Carmichael to enter the post office.

"Look how mad he looks."

"Bet he'd like to kill us."

"Aw, he won't do nothing."

"He's too buggy to do anything."

Uzhegh remained outside, because the door was small for him. As Riegel came out with a handful of mail, the muttering rose again. Uzhegh leaned over and yawned suddenly in Fisher's face, showing his teeth and flicking out his long yellow tongue.

Fisher gave a little shriek, tried to leap back, tripped, and sat down. The other four youths laughed. While their attention was on Fisher, Riegel went into Patchik's Drug Store. Here he picked up an afternoon paper and bought a gallon of ice-cream. Then he and Uzhegh set off towards the Scarron mansion, where Riegel and his wife lived while they ran the estate as a kind of camp or boarding-school for the young of the delegates to the Conference.

"Will thith not melt on ze way home?" asked Uzhegh, carrying the container.

"No; that's a new super-insulating plastic," said Riegel. "It'll keep for a week, even in this heat."

"Zat—that will be long enough for this party. Tell me, why did zose young Terrans treating you so disrespectful? Are they members of some hostile clan?"

Riegel shrugged. "No. They just don't like me."

"Why?"

"I suppose I know too much."

"That is a peculiar reason."

"Well, there's always been some hostility between the thinking fraction of my species and the unthinking ma-

jority. It becomes aggravated as science advances, and becomes less comprehensible to the layman."

"Why do you thubmit?"

"What could I do? I'm not allowed to shoot them. If I punched one, the rest would spatter me. At least two are bigger than I, and I'm three times their age. And if I beat up one, I'd go to jail."

"It is not the way we do sings," said Uzhegh. "Now, tell me, this is a working day, and zey look old enough to work. Why are they doing nossing?"

"Don't you know about our educational and child-labor laws? They're not allowed to work until they're twenty-five."

"Why? They looking adult."

"THE UNIONS want 'em out of the labor-market. There's not enough work to go around even with our eighteen-hour work-week. So the state makes all the young stay in school till they're twenty-five. It's summer vacation now, but thank God that'll soon be over."

"I should sink all that education would make them more courteous and cultured-acting."

"Oh, most of them passed the academic saturation-point years ago—at thirteen or fourteen."

"The academic what?"

"I mean, they're incapable of absorbing any more book-learning. They can't be taught trades, because their parents all want them to belong to the business and professional classes, and are outraged if they're made to use their hands. So they're given courses in things like basketry and square-dancing; between times they hang around, bored and spoiled, and think up deviltry."

"I am not sinking we should find this custom thuitable."

"You stick to your own customs. If any missionaries for Terran ideas come to Ahlia, I hope you kill them."

Uzhegh shook his crested head. "Yet you have an elaborate apparatus for enforcement of law. Why is it not operating?"

"Because of our theories of juvenile psychology. These hold that all misbehavior is the result of frustration or insecurity, and therefore the parents' fault."

"I am glad all Terrans are not like zose. It is partly knowing some like you and Doctor Lofting that made me recommend that our delegation be empowered to sign the constitution. You have done marvelous to keeping ze young of all those different thepecies playing together."

"It hasn't been easy," said Riegel. "Some are worse than human children. The young Akbran is careless about its respirator, and twice we've found it after it had taken it off and passed out. The Moorians, being arboreal, are almost impossible to housebreak. And I had to refuse admission to the young Ghazag for fear it would eat some of our smaller off-earthers."

"Considering their ancestry, it is natural. How is my Tsitsav?"

"Fine."

"Has he behaving?"

"Very well; he's a responsible youngster."

"We of Hwrajar—Pchum all are, by comparison."

"Tsitsav has taken the Gordonian, Kranakiloa, under his wing."

"Wing?"

"Protection. Gordonians are jolly enough but carry playfulness to the point of damn foolishness."

"I know; they clown even in ze most solemn moments at the Conference."

They walked in silence. Riegel glanced with affection towards the tall solemn Ahlian. He had found Ahlians the most attractive of the delegates, though most Terrans considered them stuffed-shirt. Their rigid morality struck most Earthmen as either hypocritical or impractical. At the same

time it made the more flexible Terrans uncomfortable in their presence. Perhaps Norman Riegel liked them because he was a little like an Ahlian himself.

Uzhegh spoke: "Here we are. Where do I putting zis container?"

THEY WERE walking up the driveway of the Scarron estate. The estate had been for sale since Mrs. Scarron died at the ripe, but not exceptional age of 143. None of the heirs wanted the place to live in, as the mansion was considered a white elephant. When the Conference had begun, the Terran bureau that coped with other-worldly visitors sought a means of caring for their young. The bureau had therefore approached Riegel, as the local head of the Society for Interplanetary Union. He, in turn, persuaded the Scarron heirs to lend the mansion rent-free for the summer, and got a furniture-dealer to lend some second-hand furniture. Riegel and his wife, childless themselves, moved into the mansion and ran it as a school-camp for young off-earthers.

Now the Constitution was about to be signed, and the extraterrestrial young given back to their parents, the Riegels intended to give the young ones a last farewell party.

Somebody saw Riegel and Uzhegh. The twenty-three off-earthers poured out, walking, running, hopping, and slithering. The one that looked a little like an aard-vaark, for instance, was Gnish Axal, the Vza from Altair V. They talked in various approximations of English, except the Wanian, whose vocal organs did not work in the human aural range; the Thomasonian, who communicated by sign-language; and the two Borisovians, who talked by flashing built-in colored lights.

The Gordonian, Kranakiloa by name, flowed out with the rest. It looked something like an oversized otter with six limbs. The Gordonians presented a

problem to the Conference. They had the lowest intelligence of any species represented, though they talked and used tools. There had been discussion of putting them under a trusteeship, but the delegates could not agree on any plan.

Kranakiloa danced around Riegel and Uzhegh, squeaking: "Gimmel! Gimmel!" and snatching at the container of ice-cream. Then Tsitsav, the young Ahlian, caught the Gordonian, shook it, and said: "Run off and play or I will thpank you."

Tsitsav was about as tall as Riegel, though of even lighter build. He spoke in his own language to Uzhegh, who responded. Their long forked tongues flicked out, touched, and vanished. Riegel had an impression that the older Ahlian was devoted to his offsprings, but it was hard to tell. To an outsider, Ahlians' faces seemed expressionless.

The Ahlians walked off claw in claw. Alice Riegel came out and shoosed the off-earthers back to their playground. She gave Riegel a sharp look and said: "What's the matter, darling?"

"Nothing. Just the young thugs at the post office." Riegel gave details.

"Shouldn't you tell the police?"

"That wouldn't do any good. I've told you before. They haven't done anything to be arrested for."

"Couldn't disorderly conduct be stretched to cover it?"

"It could be, perhaps but it won't. You know how people are. 'Nothing's too good for our kids'—and they won't believe what 'our kids' are up to." A wild look came into Riegel's eye and a shrill hoarse tone into his voice. The effect was startling, as his manner was normally urbane and self-possessed. "Some day I'll get a gun and mow the little hustards down! King Herod had the right idea."

"Now, dear," said Alice Riegel. "You need a good strong cup of tea."

"What I need," said Riegel, "is a

set of crosses, some spikes, and a hammer."

"The party's coming fine," said Alice brightly. "They've been as good as gold, except that Gnish started to dig up the front lawn for grubs; and I caught Krasnikloa dancing on the high-diving springboard. When I ordered him down, he just laughed."

"What did you do?"

"Oh, Tsitsav hauled him down and spanked him, though it's a little like spanking a piece of steel cable."

"They *are* tough. How about the pool?"

"We've drained and scrubbed it. Doctor Lofting's coming over to give them their final checkups and help with the party."

"Good old Doc! Without him and Tsitsav, I don't know how we'd have survived."

THE FIVE youths leaned against the front of the post office. Fisher, having picked himself up, glowered at the backs of Riegel and the Ahlian. He said: "Now we just gotta spatter those..." He rolled out a string of epithets that stigmatized his subjects' legitimacy, ancestry, chances of salvation, and sexual habits all at once. "We're not gonna let 'em get away with that!"

"What you got in mind, spud?" asked Meehan.

"Listen. Longpants bought a gallon of ice-cream. That means a party for all the little off-earthies, see? Now, have we all got baseball bats?"

"I don't have none," said Snow.

"Then we'll bust into old man Rizzi's sporting-goods store and get you one. Now, here's what we'll do..."

He was finishing his explanation when Doctor Lofting got out of his car and walked towards the post office. Again the ventriloquistic muttering arose:

"Look at old Whiskers."

"Bet he chews it in his sleep."

"Nah, that's to make him look like a doctor."

"Him a doctor? Just a drunken old bum."

"He couldn't doctor a horse."

At the entrance to the post office, Lofting turned and said pleasantly: "Boys, if you're trying to make a date with me, you're wasting your time. I'm not that kind of guy."

Then he went in. Lofting at this stage was neither old nor drunken; merely convivial and middle-aged. A widower, he had been drawn to the Riegels by a common interest in the Society for Interplanetary Union. His beard was the only unconventional thing about him, though it was enough to draw the attention of the five.

As Lofting got back in his automobile, Carmichael said: "Sassy little bastard, ain't he?"

"Some day we'll pay him a visit," said Snow.

"Hey, not till we've worked Riegel over!" said Fisher.

"Okay," said Meehan. "Time enough to figure something out for Doc later. Let's meet at twenty-hundred..."

THE PARTY went beautifully through the long August evening. The young off-earthies sang and romped and played games—all but Gnish the Vza, who lay panting in the heat, and the spidery Martian, who was not built for Terran gravity.

Alice Riegel looked at the darkening sky. The Gordonian was getting out of hand, prancing around and nipping the other guests to get them to chase it. Twice Norman Riegel had ordered it down from the high-diving tower of the empty pool.

Lightning flashed and thunder growled. Zeu, the Morenan, threw its tentacles around Alice Riegel in terror. She called: "Dear! We'd better take them inside."

Riegel looked skyward. "Not yet; it won't rain for another half-hour."

Meehan's gang watched the proceedings through a privet-hedge on the grounds. While Mrs. Scarron lived, her gardener had kept the hedge in trim; but now it had shot up to a height of ten feet. From where they stood, the youths could see the mob of young extraterrestrials playing behind the house—but not the kitchen door, which was hidden by a corner of the rambling edifice.

The gang had arrived late because Kraus had not appeared at the rendezvous, and they had gone to fetch him. In fact, he was afraid of the consequences of the raid, and less avid for aggression and destruction than the others. He had hoped they would go without him. But when they appeared at his home, fear of losing status as a gang-member led him to join them.

"Shall we get 'em now?" whispered Fisher, swinging his hat in little circles. "Shall we?"

"Wait till it gets darker," said Meehan. "They'd know us, even with masks, in this light."

"Gonna rain soon," said Snow. "Then they'll go in."

"Keep your shirt on, spud," said Meehan. "Who's running this?"

"Boy, I'd sure like a crack at that Martian," said Carmichael. "He'd go splush like a bug."

"He's a buggy hug all right," said Snow, suppressing a giggle at his own wit.

The off-earthlers played musical chairs, all but the Martian, the Vza, and Kranakiloa the Gordonian. Kranakiloa was chasing its tail in circles, as its mind could not be kept on any one thing for more than a few seconds.

Thunder came louder. Though the sun had not long set, the clouds darkened the scene almost to full nocturnal gloom. Doc Lofting, wearing a butler's apron, called from the kitchen door: "Hey, Norman! Better start herding 'em in. I'll dish up the ice-cream and cake." Those off-

earthlers who could not eat these substances were to get their native foods.

"We gotta go now!" wailed Fisher.

"Okay, put the bags on," said Meehan. Each youth produced a paper bag with holes cut for eyes, pulled it over his head, and fastened it in place with a rubber band around his neck.

"Hurry up!" groaned Fisher.

"Ready?" said Meehan. "Let's go!"

The Riegels were herding the last of the extraterrestrials in the kitchen door when the five youths pushed through the hedge, breaking down some of the privet-plants, and ran towards the back of the mansion. They ran quietly, stopping and gripping their hats. As they rounded the corner of the house they could see the kitchen door and the tail-end of the procession going in.

AT THAT instant, Kranakiloa ducked under Riegel's arm and bolted out the door, screeching: "You can't gatch me!" It loped across the back lawn towards the swimming-pool. The first drops fell.

"I will get him, Profethor," said Tsitsav, the young Ahllan. He pushed past Riegel.

Kranakiloa headed for the high-diving tower. Fisher pointed at the long dark shape rippling past in front of the gang.

"Let's get that one!" he said. "He's by himself."

"Come hack!" cried Tsitsav.

Kranakiloa glanced around. There was a bright flash and a crash of thunder; Kranakiloa scooted for a patch of shrubbery.

"Hey! Who you are?" said Tsitsav to the gang as they converged from different directions on the track of the fleeing Gordonian. The gang slowed uncertainly. Tsitsav danced around to place himself between them and Kranakiloa, who had vanished into the bushes.

"You go away!" said Tsitsav. "I am responsible for him."

Meehan and Fisher stepped forward, swinging their clubs. Tsitsav advanced too, baring his teeth, though he weighed only half what they did.

There was an instant of furious whirling action, a thudding of bats in the hands of five brawny adolescents, and then they stepped back. Meehan wrung blood from his right arm, which had been gashed by Tsitsav's teeth. Tsitsav lay on the sward, his limbs thrashing and tail flopping.

The sound of footsteps brought the boys around. Riegel and Lofting were bearing down on them, the latter armed with a rolling-pin. The Meehan gang, despite their advantage in weight and armament, raced off into the darkness, scattering. The older men ran after them until they were winded and the youths had outrun them and vanished.

"C'mon back—see if he's alive—" gasped Lofting.

He and Riegel returned, breathing heavily. The rain started to come down hard. Riegel said: "Did you see—any of their faces?"

"No—they had some kind of mask—or hood."

Riegel raised his voice over the storm. "I can guess who they were."

"So—can I but—you'd have a hell of a time proving it."

They got to where Tsitsav lay. Lofting bent over and said: "Get my bag. You'll find it inside the front door. And tell Alice to keep the others in."

When Riegel got back, Lofting looked up at him, water dripping from his goatee. "I'll check, but it'll just be a formality."

"Dead?"

"Good and dead. Skull smashed."

"Isn't there—I mean, he's more like a reptile, and they're pretty tenacious..."

"No. His brains are squashed and

his heart's stopped." Lofting got instruments out of the bag.

"Shall I call police?"

"Just a minute. Let me think," said Lofting. He continued his examination. The downpour slackened.

At last Lofting spoke: "If we call the cops, they'll arrest our young friends and there'll be a big stink. But nobody'll be convicted. We can't swear we recognized anybody, because of those bags over their heads. Even if we could, you know what juries are. Electrocute one of our poor dear boys for socking some slimy reptile from outer space?"

"We have to start *somewhere* with equal enforcement of law."

"What law? The state legislature debated a bill to count off-earthers as people at the last session, but did nothing. Some politicians used just that argument about our poor dear boys. No doubt such a law will be passed, but not in time to help Tsitsav."

"Well, do we just let those little obscenities get away with it?"

"I'm thinking."

"What in hell shall I tell Uzhegh?"

LOFTING continued: "If this comes out, it'll break up the Conference. The Ablians won't sign the Constitution—not that I'd blame them—and a lot of the others will pull out too. Away goes interplanetary union! That's too important. I don't think it's worth revenge for Tsitsav's murder, even if we could get revenge."

"Well then, what? Shall we pretend it was an accident?"

"You're catching on, Norm. First I'll heave Tsitsav into the pool." The body flopped on to the concrete below. "Now let's catch that fool Gordonian. Maybe he doesn't know enough to spoil our scheme."

They dragged a whimpering Krana-kiloa out of the bushes. The Gordonian could hardly talk intelligently—not that its talk was ever very intelli-

gent. All they got from it was that it had seen Tsitsav running after it, had started for the shrubs, and then had been frightened out of its few wits by thunder and hidden itself.

"Go on in the house, Krana," said Riegel, "and get your ice-cream and cake." When the Gordonian had left, he said to the doctor: "It apparently never even saw the five masked figures. Now what?"

"We'll say Tsitsav climbed the tower, looking for Kranakiloa, and fell into the empty pool."

"SO WE DID," said Lofting. "There was a lot of grief and sympathy but no hostility."

"But how did that land you here?" asked Mpanza.

"Couldn't stand it where I was. The Riegels got disgusted with Far Hills and moved away too. I stayed for a few years, watching Meehan's gang sneer when they saw me. They knew I knew. It hurt my professional conscience to fake the death-certificate; and it hurt it even more to let those five get away scot-free. Young Tsitsav, under his scales, was a good person."

"Well, I began hitting this stuff more than I should, and my practice

went to pot. So I came out here, as it's hard to get a qualified medico to serve the Embassy on Ahlia. If you wonder why I like to do favors for the Ahlians, who aren't very chummy, it's to try to make things up to them."

Okmen said: "If the bottle bothers you, you can fix that by being psyched."

"But don't you see, their modern techniques drag everything out of you? How long could I have hidden the true story of Tsitsav?"

"Oh. But now—"

"Now I don't give a damn any more."

"Well, what did happen to Meehan's gang?"

"Oh, Meehan was killed in a knife-fight over a girl. Carmichael went to jail for burglary, and Fisher was killed trying to fly his family's plane under a bridge. The other two grew up to be more or less normal adults. A few years later, the current child-rearing fad changed from progressive-permissive to rigidly disciplinary. So, the last I heard, the kids were being kept under fair control. But from my point of view, the harm had been done. Charlie! Pour me another, please."



Why had the sun risen a week ahead of schedule?

don't miss this unusual story by CALVIN M. KNOX

SUNRISE ON MERCURY

Plus topnotch Science Fiction by A. Bertram Chandler,
Carol Emshwiller, and many others

in the May issue of

THE ORIGINAL SCIENCE FICTION

STORIES



Now on sale everywhere

Notice to our readers: **THIS IS FICTION!**
Don't write us for specification of the Pig's
Tail circuit, please! We wish we had one
much as you do.

ALL AROUND A PIG'S TAIL

by Winston K. Marks

Author of "The Fission of Mrs. Custer"

Illustrated by FREAS

DONALD CURRY dropped the radio program popularity survey sheet he'd been studying and squinted with real annoyance. *There it was again!*

"...on behalf of Burpo, the self-burping baby formula that cuts junior's feeding time in half Doctors say..."

He stretched a lanky arm across the expanse of desk and felt of the switch on his small radio. It was off, all right, but then it might be shorted across. He heaved his bulk from the leather swivel chair and snatched the line cord free from the floor plug. *The message continued:*

"...so why spend hours daily, patting your infant on the popo, when two drops of Burpo in his formula will..."

Curry stabbed a button on the intercom. "Hansen, do you hear it this time?"

His assistant cut in instantly. "Yes I do chief."

"Well, don't sit there; do something! I can't work with that racket. Check the outer offices. Get the janitor or the building superintendent or somebody. Get it stopped, do you hear?"

"Yes, chief."

Curry stared at the intercom. He pressed number three button. "Shella!"

"Yes, Mr. Curry?"

"Somebody playing a radio out there?"

"Well, we've been looking, but... you mean, that Burpo business?"

"Yes, that Burpo business. It's still on in here. Listen!"

"...the large economy size. Banish worry, banish care, banish baby's tummy air...with Burpo! Now Burpo contains no harsh..."

"Yes, it's out here, too."

"Well, see that it's stopped, please,



Sheila," Curry commanded. The commercial ended as he spoke, and he picked up the survey again.

Exactly twelve minutes later, the thing started again. Curry let it beat into his brain for the whole sixty seconds before he arose, slammed the paper down and screamed for Hansen without bothering with the intercom. His bull voice got results; the assistant catapulted through the door.

"Chief, I've *been* checking. That's

our own ad copy for Ransome-Burlingame—you know, the soap, detergent and deodorant people. It's our regular Monday morning Baby Baker show commercial."

"Albert, I recognize our own wretched copy when I hear it; I want it out of my office, and I didn't ask for an affidavit of authorship."

"But...we can't seem to locate any cause. I checked with the building custodian and he wants to know..."

"I'm not interested in questions; I want answers! Now get me some. Call the radio station. Call the network central office and find out what they are doing over there."

HANSEN scurried out, his paunch jiggling at his unaccustomed pace. The executive watched him go and then scrubbed the scalp under his thick shock of wiry, gray hair with impatient fingers. The air was quiet, but the insipid words of the commercial cloyed his brain. The dead cigar clenched between his teeth dropped an inch of ashes on his brown tailored suit.

The intercom spoke with a soprano voice. "Mr. Curry, the report on Mr. Hansen's inquiry from the network..."

"Yes, yes? Did you tell them to stop whatever they are doing? Fools, spraying the stuff around so it comes out of the woodwork!"

"Well, they say they are getting reports of it all over the country, and they disclaim any responsibility. They want to know if they should pull the rest of our Burpo ads."

"I don't care *how* they stop it, just so they stop it." He switched over to Hansen. "Albert, follow that through, now. We support that lousy network, so don't take any guff."

"But, Mr. Curry, they claim it's not their fault."

"They offered to pull our advertising, didn't they? They as much as admitted they were doing it."

"I think they mean that something is picking up their original broadcast and re-transmitting it."

"Well, if they aren't responsible, who is? It's our copy, and we aren't doing it, are we?"

"Not that I know..."

Curry's secretary cut in. "Will you take this call from Mr. Burlingame, Mr. Curry? He's very insistent."

"The Burpo sponsor, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; he's in charge of sales."

Curry crossed his fingers. "Put him on."

"That you, Curry?"

"Yes, Mr. Burlingame. Nice to hear your voice. How..."

"It's big. It's good! It's fine! Can't imagine how you got it by the Federal Communications Commission, but this cinches a renewal of your contract with us. Just wanted you to know our first reaction; nice little surprise for us. Congratulations, Curry!" He hung up.

Curry cursed and mouthed the words. "It's big, it's good, it's fine." Hansen came in, and Curry swung on him. "It's murder, that's what it is. That pap is bad enough when you can cut it off, but when you can't..."

"But, chief," Hansen suggested, "should we disclaim credit for it just yet? If it's just some freak effect, and if it stops now, why not let them think that..."

They both stiffened as the whispering commercial began once more. "Try Burpo, the self-hurping..."

SHEILA's voice over-rode on the intercom. "Mr. Curry, the Burpo—I mean, the Mayor is on the phone. Shall I tell him you are cutting baby's feeding time in half?"

"Put him on," Curry said, then he shouted, "Tell him what?"

"Tell him that you are out?" the girl said as if repeating.

"No, I'm in. Hello, Your Honor, Yes, Mayor. Yes, it's our program, but aren't responsible for harsh ingredients—that is, we have nothing to do with the phenomenon. That's right; somebody's horsing around with something very illegal. Yes, sir. We are investigating, and I promise we will banish baby's tummy air—we will clean this thing up quickly as we can, Your Honor."

He hung up and turned on Hansen, infuriated. "You see what it's doing? Do you want credit for that?" He dug his fingers into his ears to cut out the insistent blithering.

"Hansen!" he said in a low, horrified rasp, "it doesn't stop—even when..."

The assistant put his fingers to his ears, and the color drained from his pink cheeks. They both wiggled fingers deeper into their ears, but it made no difference. The commercial whispered on to its final simulated, self-satisfied baby-burp.

Hansen removed his fingers and looked at them as if he expected to find holes in them. The intercom hummed again. "Susie says the switchboard is jammed with calls. Are you still in, Mr. Curry?"

The president of Curry Hoffman Brown & Selby regarded the little ivory speaker for an instant. "No. I'm out, Sheila, until further notice." He released the lever and said, "Albert, someone is doing this to us. And I have a bunch, Albert; I have a big, stinking, rotten hunch."

FOURTEEN floors below, in the same building, Curry stormed through the glass doors labelled, *Darby Frank and Shotton Advertising Agency*. The place was in much the same state of turmoil as his own three floors of office suites; no one moved to stop him as he punched through Easton's outer defenses and moved into the inner sanctum.

As he burst open the heavy panel, a fringe of people turned, saw him, recognized him with open mouths and melted away from Easton's desk where they had been gathered. Easton stared up at him through a thundercloud and fired the first bolt.

"Are you out of your head, Curry? He slapped both hands on his desk and arose to his full, fat, five-foot-six.

"Don't worry," Curry snapped. "I'm not going to hit you, you little viper; I'm going to stomp on your head."

The threat bounced off Easton without penetrating. "Came down to gloat, did you? Ever hear of the FCC? I don't know how you pulled it off, but

you'll fry for this one, you big, stupid oaf!"

Easton's intercom clicked, and a woman's voice said, "Here's the report from the FCC. I taped it." The snap of a switch was followed by a male voice.

"We were ready for the second message, but we couldn't get a fix. Good, strong sky-wave, but so diffused it was worthless. The scope went crazy—that is, our testing equipment registered the wave-form, but we were unable to analyze it before it stopped."

The message left Curry and Easton glaring at each other. Easton wiped some invisible sweat from his white eye-brows and Curry sucked a lungful of air to launch his tirade. The words never came, for at that instant the third commercial swept into their brains.

"Girls," asked a soft, confidential, female voice, "have you tried the new Drool Shampoo? If you haven't, let me ..."

The air grunted out of Curry as if he had been kicked in the stomach. Easton's jaw opened at a slant, and he sank to his chair, poleaxed. Drool Shampoo was one of Easton's accounts, one over which the two agencies had long battled.

"...your hair glisten like a web of sheer naughtiness. He'll delight in the halo of your..."

IT WAS A brief commercial, and at the end another cut in. This time it was a man's urgent voice. "...that statement. So try a pack today, won't you. Faggits are the smoke for you."

Easton's eyes were glassy. "That's ours, too. What are we going to do, Curry?"

The bigger man jammed his hands into his pockets and paced the length of thick carpet. "I pulled the Burpo copy from the air, but I don't know what to advise, Sam." His voice was apologetic. "If you have any ideas..."

Easton sighed, got up and came around his desk. "I guess we're in this together, Don. Sorry I popped off."

Neither met the other's eye as they shook hands and promised to keep in touch. Curry returned to his own suite as his pretty secretary returned her phone to its cradle.

"No soap, Mr. Curry?"

"No soap, Sheila. Anything happen?"

"Switchboard is still jammed, but all questions. No answers." She banded him a plain, manila envelope, some seven inches square. "This came for you by messenger, marked personal; and look at the silly inscription at the bottom."

He read the label: *From: The Assn. Of M. S.*

To: Mr. D. H. Curry

His address followed, then, in pencil, at the bottom was scribbled: *All Around A Pig's Tail...*

Inside was a small plastic phonograph record labelled simply, Play at slow speed (33-1/3). He handed it back to her. "See if it's anything. Probably some talent agent's cute trick to get an audition for his client."

He retired to his private office and no sooner had seated himself than... "Does your favorite beer ever taste flat? Then you haven't tasted sparkling Dewe, the Super-Brew. Discriminating hosts..."

Curry called Hansen in. "Find out anything from the tasty cool—from the F. C. C. yet?"

His assistant shook his worried head. "Can't get through to them. We're still trying Washington, but I guess they're swamped with calls, too. How do you suppose a dozen cans right now—how do you suppose the man in the street is taking it?"

Another worry wrinkle creased Curry's high forehead. "Yeah. Wait until the evening papers explain to him about the invasion of his privacy and audience captivity and all that. Won't

the beer that never goes flat—won't the press harpies have fun with this? I can see the headlines."

Sheila burst in without knocking. As she elbowed the door her pale face and the little portable phonograph she carried brought Curry lumbering from his chair to help her. He plugged in the cord as she touched the switch. "Listen," she said simply.

THE NEEDLE "ticked" into the groove, and a man's well-trained voice said brightly, "If you are the addressee, you are one of some 2500 recipients of this little record, and to you we send—*Greetings!*"

"By now, you will agree, the Association of Mad Scientists has thoroughly plucked your curiosity with a demonstration of the ultimate in advertising vehicles.

"Mr. Manufacturer, do you find your sales dropping off? And Mr. Advertising Agency, are your contracts slipping? It may be your medium. Why be satisfied with half-baked mediums, with medium mediums, and especially with overdone mediums?"

"Try Pig's Tail, the medium that's never mediocre!"

"Prominent authorities everywhere are saying that Pig's Tail is new, unique. Now why stick to old, tired and true mediums? Take the stockyards. To hoars who savor bogwash best, it's Pig's Tail, two-to-one. Yes, folks, Pig's Tail is unconditionally guaranteed to be untried, untrue, unproved and untested. Eminent experts everywhere are saying, 'We never heard of Pig's Tail!' No other medium can make that statement!"

"We, the Associated Mad Scientists, are so sure you are going to love this new medium, that we are making this special introductory offer. Now listen carefully, because this offer may never be repeated in your community. And it's good this week only. Here it is:

"If, at the end of this week, you

don't agree that Pig's Tail is the most charming, the most beguiling medium, if you do not admit that the commercials on Pig's Tail are the most stirring, the most sensitive and in the best taste...then, and listen carefully, folks, then the Association of Mad Scientists will accept you as a full, paid-up member and welcome you to the sty! There, now, isn't *that* fair?"

The oh-so-typically syrupy voice dropped to a low, confidential, personal tone. "You see, folks, we're not medicine men, we're not tobacco men—we're Mad men! *And Guess What Drove Us Mad?*" A brief, maniacal laugh chopped off dramatically, as the needle ran out of grooves and the arm slammed into the spindle.

Curry came out of his crouch with a startled grunt. It was only Monday, and the record had said, or implied, this would go for at least a week. "Sheila," he said suddenly, "get me Hennessy at the net-work. On the private line."

It took her forty minutes, during which time Curry and Hansen endured two more series of the best radio copy the 20th Century had produced. That was what they had boasted, anyway, when their own copy-writers had written much of it.

Hurrying along as if to cram more into the minute or so of commercials at each fifteen minute break, the whispering medium touched lightly and tellingly on several products, skipping from station to station, network to network for its pernicious gleanings.

Curry winced as the voice featured soap, tobacco, chewing gum and deodorants—oh, those deodorants!

"...so you see, men, all life is a game of selling...selling yourself. And you can't sell when you smell. Spend a penny for your scent's sake. Yes, spend two-bits on your armpits. It pays to spray with Ninks! N-i-n-k-s. Rhymes with Kinks, and there'll be no

kinks in your date with that lovely little..."

The call finally came through, and Curry coughed the cotton from his throat. "Hennessy? This is Curry, over at CHB & S. I want every spot of our copy pulled off the air until further notice. Got it?"

The receiver rattled in his ear and he snapped back, "Contracts be damned! Run the shows as scheduled and charge us, but don't even breathe the name of any of our products. Have you got that straight?" He slammed down the phone and rapped into the intercom, "Sheila, take a memo. Copies to all ad agencies..."

BY TUESDAY morning, radio listeners were not too amazed to discover that all major networks were suddenly on sustaining. As Monday evening had worn on, the whispering voices had diminished in frequency and finally stopped. A great wave of relief swept the advertising world. Many had pictured all night sessions with sleepless populations descending upon radio stations and stores carrying the beckled products, and wreaking the vengeance that was in everyone's heart.

Curry spent a restless night filled with obscene semantic nightmares, in which his nose was a long tentacle that twitched and probed as he conducted a market research on behalf of Ninx, Flaxx and Smial deodorants and soaps.

He awakened reluctantly. It was blissfully quiet in his bachelor penthouse apartment. Then his eyes alighted on the clock on his night-stand. It said 6:57, and he held his breath. Any minute now he'd know.

He clutched the electric blanket and doubled up as music blasted the serenity of his brain, and a nauseating male quartet sang cheerfully:

*"Good For Breakfast,
Lunch Or Dinners—
Eat The Breakfast-
Food Of Winners!*

"Eat *Alfies*—the new, vitamin-packed, crisp, crunchy cereal made from the *Tender* little tops of the nitrogen-rich alfalfa plant. Boys and girls, winning athletes say..."

"We're off!" Curry moaned and buried his head uselessly in his pillow. That Alfie commercial had been killed last night, so it was not originating from the studio.

Curry should have known better. Anyone who could figure out a system like Pig's Tail would be brainy enough to have his ammunition ready on tape when the advertisers pulled their radio commercials.

And taped they were. The select, Oscar-Winning peculiarities that were the repetitious stock-in-trade of the big agencies, the big budget commercials screened from coast-to-coast networks, now gave new meaning to the old phrase, "Saturation advertising."

His alarm chimed softly. His valet heard it and came in with a tray bearing his breakfast coffee and the two leading morning papers.

LAST NIGHT'S headlines had been gruesome, but strangely, this morning's press was playing the story down. There was a distinctly different note. The newspaper admen had had time to think things over and realize that this Pig's Tail thing was reflecting on the ludicrousness of the whole advertising field. They were guilty of some pretty far-fetched garbage, too.

Curry poured a cup of the black, scalding brew down his parched throat, dressed and left for the office. His chauffeur's "Good morning, Mr. Curry," was flatly uncordial. Traffic became progressively worse as they proceeded, until the impatient tycoon snarled at his driver, "Can't you get the lead out? I'm already for a dish of—I'm already half an hour late!"

That again. God! This could wreck communications. How could a man think straight with that damned drumming in his bowl of Alfies with sugar

and cream and just taste the crackly goodness?

Sheila wasn't at her desk yet; half the force was late; Hansen showed up red-eyed and worthless. The phones were virtually useless, and no one knew anything.

In desperation, Curry told Hansen, "Check personnel and see if we don't have somebody working for us who knows something about radio stuff. Maybe an amateur, you know, a ham. Can't get anything sensible from the network, and the FCC has clammed up."

Hansen had the files searched, but he reported that the "hobby list" yielded only one name, that of Josiah Rayburn, and he had called in sick yesterday morning.

"If we don't get a line on this thing we'll be ruined before the week is out," Curry stormed. He snatched up his paper again. He had only skimmed the details at home; now he sank into the detail of the dozen stories pertaining to the new phenomenon.

There was an item on the schools, the universities. It was feared it would be necessary to discontinue classes.

Curry didn't wonder. Imagine trying to give a lecture on Shakespeare or integral calculus with a Peppy-Sleppi jingle fouling the detail.

Page two was devoted to speculations on Pig's Tail. All theories ascribing the intrusion to natural causes—such as reflections from the moon, atmospheric conditions, etc.—were flatly discredited. The broadcasts pointed to intelligent editing, however depraved the motives might be.

These were offered as established data:

1. Signal incidence was confined to the U.S.A. continental land area, with only slight fringe effects along the Mexican and Canadian borders. Between, coverage was solid.

2. No ground waves were found. The diffused sky-waves slanted down

at such acute angles to make hastily contrived direction-finders useless.

3. The radiation, itself, was an entirely new, complex wave-form, being hailed by electronic experts as the most important effect in the field of signal transmission since de Forest. Analysis was proceeding rapidly, and duplication and ultimate detection of the source or sources should be possible within a month...

A MONTH! Curry moaned and put aside the early edition as Sheila arrived with a later headline: President Offers Amnesty To Pig's-Tailers. The story expanded the thought in words of few syllables. Congress had met in secret joint emergency session. The political significance of a national captive audience was obvious. The president's message stated that if the inventors would conserve the secret of the process and turn it over to the authorities, no one would be prosecuted.

"No one will be prosecuted?" Hansen said incredulously over Curry's shoulder.

Curry turned slowly in his well-oiled swivel-chair. "Albert, it looks like we are licked. Yes, I know; that fantastic phonograph record made these people sound like a bunch of drunken copy-writers. But suppose they *are* maniacs? What they've got on the ball Russia would give a billion dollars for."

He bowed his leonine head and pressed his huge palms to his temples. "Meanwhile, don't you see what they're driving at?"

"National suicide, if you ask me! It's a terrible thing! Mind-slavery, that's what it is," Hansen said.

Curry spoke into the intercom. "Sheila, do you have the envelope that screwy record came in?"

She brought it, and Curry studied the slogan below the address. "All around a pig's tail..." he read aloud.

Sheila, who had turned away, whirled back suddenly.

"...is pork!" she said loudly, as if she had just solved the whole mystery.

Curry grunted, "Hah?"

"All around a pig's tail is pork," she repeated. "It's an old silly saying."

"What in hell does that tell us?" her boss demanded.

They considered it for a long moment, and Sheila's inspired look faded. To Curry's mind, pork, brought only the words, "bread and butter," and that made him think of Ransome-Burlingame. A decision suddenly jelled in his he-lahoured brain.

"Sheila, get on the phone—use messengers if you have to—and arrange a meeting in our conference room for earliest date. Get as many of our major accounts as you can to have their ad execs here. I don't care where they are. Tell them we'll pay their plane fare, but this is life and death concerning their contracts with us!

He arose to his feet and began a slow pacing that turned into a marathon before the week was out.

IT WAS SATURDAY morning at last. The week had passed somehow, without a revolution or catastrophic disruption beyond the momentary faltering of business and industry on Black Tuesday. People showed up for work on time again, learned to talk in short, nervous spurts, and to proof-read everything they wrote while under the momentary bombardments of verbiage.

The President's message had been ignored, and the poisonous drivel had continued unabated. From seven A.M. to five P. M. the messages penetrated deeply into the brain, down where thoughts are born, and by Saturday it was no longer noteworthy to hear a bus-driver casually announce the name of a stop as, "First and Panty-girdle!"

Saturday, promptly at ten A.M. Cur-

ry strode purposefully into the conference room and faced eleven men down the long, polished table. An expectant cloud of cigar smoke hung over the men who represented four hundred million dollars in consumer production, and about ten and a half million in advertising revenue for CHB & S.

"Gentlemen," Curry spoke with a note of deep calm, "the week is almost over, and so is a whole era of uninhibited advertising. Monday morning we will face an entirely changed problem of selling."

Several in the group were already with him. They nodded with pained understanding. But a few wore cynical looks. Absalom Johnson of General Tobacco, who had flown in from Honolulu, gargled ominously and spoke. "I figured this was an alibi session. Out with your plan, Donald, if you have a plan, which I doubt, the way you let this thing get out of hand. Call yourself an advertising agency..."

Curry stood his ground, fighting the old impulse to rock back on his heels and grin diffidently. He tightened his eyes and levelled off. "Let's start with you, Absalom. Tell me something. Is that Manderton Cigaret of yours *really* a damned bit superior to any other two-bit pack on the market?"

Johnson glared back then laughed hoarsely. "If it isn't you're a terrific liar."

Curry didn't crack a smile. "We've all been liars, Absalom, traditional, professional liars, manufacturing absurd copy about your products, blowing up superficial little points of advantage in such superlatives that we've ruptured the English language almost beyond salvage."

HE TURNED to old Tom Burlingame. "Worse yet, we've peddled things like your Burpo. A dollar a bottle, and tell me, Tom, what's in it beside bicarbonate of soda?"

Burlingame flushed, tight-lipped, and

the group stirred. Curry continued, hacking them individually, slamming the fact home that it was their insatiable greed for sales, sales, and more sales that had driven ad-men to their final debasement. He reviled the use of semi-hypnotic repetition and odious slogans and jingles such as the Flaxx Deodorant song. He twisted the thumb-screws by opening his mouth wide and giving tongue to one of the verses that had been soaked into their brains all week long:

*"When He Holds You In His Arms
Cherishing Your Dainty Charms,
You'll Say Thaaaaaaaaaank
For Fragrant Flaaaaaaaaanx!"*

"That stinking little gem, gentlemen, is right off my own firm's copy desks. You, Schwarz, paid us about \$20,000 to invent and broadcast it. That's over a thousand dollars a word. Real, immortal stuff! Proud of your investment? Sure, it sold your stink-killer by the car-load.

"But, gentlemen, that routine is done, dead, finished. You should realize it, but I'm spelling it out. The so-called Association of Mad Scientists has made its point; in one short week they have conditioned the public to vomit mentally when they hear that kind of crud. And I for one am tickled to goddamnedhell about it."

He shoved his chin out even further. "From here on out, this agency talks plain English to the consumer. We stick to facts, avoid every superlative in the book, and for a change we abide by just ordinary standards of good taste. If the truth about your product won't sell it, it can't be sold—a revolting conclusion, but there it is. Thank you for coming, gentlemen. Good day!"

THE WHISPERING terminated at five P.M. Saturday.

At nine a.m. Monday, a messenger delivered a small box the size of a five-gallon can, and another small disc rec-

ord to the offices of Curry Hoffman Brown and Selby.

Hansen and Sheila set up the portable phonograph while Curry stripped the corrugated from a rather home-made looking device. The base was about a foot square and eight inches high. Vacuum tubes peeked out through vent holes, and on top was a lucite rod twisted into a corkscrew, some four inches at the base and tapering to a point eight inches high. A fine filament of copper threaded through the rod from base to tip. An ordinary light cord ran from the base, terminating in a two prong plug.

As Curry cast aside the last of the packing he looked up to see a neatly-dressed young man with a broad grin loafing in the doorway.

"Whadda you want?" Curry snapped.

"You don't know me," the intruder said, "but I'm on your payroll. Down in art layout. Name is Josiah Rayburn. I thought you might like some help with the rig, there."

Hansen demonstrated his one executive talent. He snapped his finger. "Rayburn, the amateur radio man. 'Ham', isn't it?"

Rayburn nodded and still leaned against the jamb. "I'd suggest you play the record. It might explain things a little."

Curry stared long at Rayburn, then back to the device. "Spin it, Sheila," he said, and the record played.

The cheerful voice again: "Good morning, friends and neighbors. Quiet out, isn't it?"

"We of the A.M.S. were overwhelmed by the sincere response to our offer of last week. And we are adding a little bonus to your reward. Before each of you is a working model of Pig's Tail. Gentlemen, the medium is yours."

"We regret that we couldn't comply with the President's commendable request that we keep Pig's Tail a secret. The principle is much too simple. It

can be duplicated in a radio laboratory in a few weeks, just from an analysis of the wave-form, itself.

"But do not be alarmed; as a weapon it would be a failure. The thinnest metal bead-shielding will stop the energy. Also, it can be easily 'jammed' into silence by an inaudible modulation of any ordinary commercial broadcasting wave-length.

"We leave it with you to do with as you see fit, but look out for the F. C. C. We smell some new laws in the bopper.

"Our motives should be apparent to you by now. We have even given you a strong clue to our group identity, thereby explaining how we gained nation-wide coverage—but we, as individuals, admit nothing. Our number is legion, and to jail us all would be impossible.

"We do have one apology to offer. We can't make good on our offer to induct you people into the Association of Mad Scientists. We disbanded; you see, we ain't mad no more. Good luck, thanks for getting the idea, and remember—all around a pig's tail..."

Curry snatched the record off the spindle, shook it at the curley-cue antenna on the device before them and growled, "What kind of dumb-brains are we? It was there all the time."

Sheila said dully, "All around a pig's tail is pork?"

Hansen shook his head. "I still don't get it. *Where* was it all the time?"

"On the envelope the record came in. All around a pig's tail is pork, sure. But what kind of pork, dammit?"

He sailed the little record across the office at Rayburn, who ducked and flashed his white teeth in a big grin. Curry levelled a long finger at the radio amateur. "There's the kind of pork!"

Hansen and Sheila got it together and exclaimed in unison, "Ham!"



A Department
For The
Science Fictionist

INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

by Robert A. Madle

PHILADELPHANS HOLD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE FIRST Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference was held away back in October, 1937. Among those present was Sam Moskowitz, and present in spirit was Robert W. Lowndes—two enthusiastic young science fiction fans. Nineteen years later at the fifteenth annual affair (only during the war years were Philly conferences not held) Lowndes and Moskowitz were on hand—this time as two of the featured speakers.

Robert W. Lowndes, who edits umpteen detective, western, and sports magazines, when he is not devoting his editorial talents to *Science Fiction Quarterly* and its sisters, *Future* and *Science Fiction Stories*, gave the assembled group an advance look at one of his forthcoming editorials, "Communication Problem." A piece of literature, a painting, an opera—they are art only so far as they communicate to the individual. What is art to one person may be an entirely different thing to someone else: what is merely transfer of information to one person may be the imparting of deep feeling to another. Quality, said Mr. Lowndes, should not be considered, so far as the ques-

tion of communication alone goes. If the particular art-work says something, to you, communication has been achieved. Applying this conjecture to science fiction, RWL said the s-f writer has his communication problems. What is his target of communication? It is not the cult type of reader, but the general reader. Lowndes advised the s-f writer to avoid "cult talk" and beware of the exclusive idioms of science fiction, for they can only block wide communication.

Only the science fiction writer and editor can eliminate this "block" and project science fiction into the mainstream of literature. ("Mainstream" being where a story is not listed under a specific category: "Moby Dick" is not categorized as a "sea story." Nor do you find "War and Peace" under the heading of "War Stories". For the complete text of Lowndes' speech, see the March issue of *Original Science Fiction Stories*.

Sam Moskowitz followed Lowndes with another piece of literary analysis, only this time more specific and more apt to result in repercussions of a violent nature. Sam, who has been around the field for several decades, is known primarily for his editing of the ill-fated *Science Fiction Plus*, for the writing of the history of

science fiction fandom, "The Immortal Storm," and for the many articles he has written appealing for the return to s-f of the "sense of wonder." The title of Sam's talk was, "Ray Bradbury—Influences that Shaped Him." As it turned out, Sam merely utilized the subject of his speech to trenchantly criticize the trenchant critic himself, Damon Knight.

Sam claimed that Knight had stated in his book, "In Search of Wonder", that Ray Bradbury owed his style of writing to Christopher Morley, J. D. Sellinger, and Robert Nathan.

(Knight made no such statement; see "Readin' and Writhin'" in this issue, Editor.)

Sam quoted freely from Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway to display just who *did* influence Bradbury. "Wolfe is God—and Bradbury is his prophet!" Thus spake Moskowitz. And Sam piled evidence upon evidence to such an extent that no one in the audience doubted that Bradbury was completely under the domination of old Tom.

It will be interesting to read some of the replies which will come without question. We're quite sure that Damon Knight, himself, will have *something* to say in reply. For those interested, Sam's complete speech appears in the current issue of *Sambo*, edited by Sam Martinez, PO Box 4251, Tulsa, Oklahoma. There are probably some sample copies available for 10¢.

MANY OTHER celebrities were in attendance. George O. Smith, who soared into prominence back in 1943 with his "Venus-Equilateral" series in *Astounding*, spoke on a subject with which he is well-acquainted, "Interplanetary Communication." There was a panel of authors and editors, consisting of Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, Larry Shaw (*Infinity*), and Hans Santesson (*Fantastic Universe*). There was an auction at which old science fiction mag-

azines were selling at prices as low as 15¢ each.

The evening session consisted of the showing of what may be the first Laurel and Hardy comedy—a burlesque of love in the stone age—and a reshewing of the PSFS produced film which had been displayed to New York World Convention attendees. An unofficial portion of the conference was the meeting of "The Hyborian Legion," a group dedicated to the preservation, resurrection, and propagation of the works of the late Robert E. Howard, primarily those involving the exploits of that fabulous adventurer, Conan the Cimmerian. George Heap presided, and several interesting morsels of information were divulged. First, it is conceivable that Conan will return again—although not in one of the many unpublished manuscripts which have been discovered of late. A Swedish Army officer has written "The Return of Conan," about which L. Sprague de Camp enthuses. Who will publish it we do not know, but it is likely to be Gnome Press, inasmuch as they have published all of the preceding Conan stories in book form.

An interesting, although somewhat embarrassing, incident occurred concerning the "unpublished" short story, "The Gods of the North," a REHoward yarn which appeared in *Fantastic Universe* for December, 1956. This story previously appeared as a Conan story in the August, 1953 issue of *Fantasy Fiction Magazine*, which was edited by Lester del Rey. The story, as it appeared, had been edited by L. Sprague de Camp. It turns out that the original story appeared in an obscure fan magazine, *The Fantasy Fan*, March, 1934, and was *not* a Conan story. The question, which no one seems to be able to answer, is: Was "Gods of the North" originally written in 1934 as a Conan story, and then changed for publication in *The Fantasy Fan*? Or was the story originally written as it appeared

in 1934, and to become a Conan story somewhere enroute to publication in del Rey's magazine? Sam Moskowitz, who uncovered this little anachronistic foul-up, suggested the group get busy on a complete anthology of Howard's works, as he appeared in scores of pulps other than *Weird Tales* during the 30's. Those interested in information concerning "The Hyborian Legion" may obtain same by writing to George Heap, c/o this writer, whose address can be found at the end of this department.

These conferences are great fun and, in some ways, are superior to World conventions. Another one upcoming which you should attend, if possible, is the "Midwestcon," which will be held at the North Plaza Motel, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 29 and 30. This one is noted for its lack of a program and complete informality. There is always a good time at the Midwestcon. Write to Donald E. Ford for information. Address: Box 19-T, RR #2, Wards Corner Road, Loveland, Ohio.

NEWS AND VIEWS

HARLAN ELLISON, a whirlwind of activity these days, has peddled an expanded version of his *If* novelette, "The Crackpots," to Lion Books. He has written, and sold, over eighty stories this year (1956), the majority under pseudonyms. Ellis Hart is one of his more prominent non-de-plumes.... Frank M. Robinson has replaced Fritz Leiber as Managing Editor of *Science Digest*.

Another "fan-turned-pro," Robert Silverberg, now numbers Ace Books among his numerous markets. Don Wollheim has sent him an OK for his novel, "The Year of the Freeze." Still on the subject of Silverberg: it is almost universally known that "Robert Randall" is Silverberg and Randall Garrett writing in collaboration. Silverberg informs us that there will be less "Randall" in the future, because of the lack of propinquity which now exists between them.

Silverberg, who formerly roomed with Garrett, is now a wedded man. However, says Bob, the "Bel-Rogas" stories will continue to appear, and hopes to continue the popular "Father Riley" series, the first two of which appeared in this magazine. As a matter of fact, Gnome Press has picked up the "Bel-Rogas" series for book publication.

The first outer-space industrial magazine has now appeared. October saw the launching of *Missiles and Rockets*, "The Magazine of World Astronautics." Published by American Aviation Publications, 17 E. 48th Street, New York City, with an editorial board consisting of such as Wernher von Braun and Krafft Ehrlicke, this is indeed off to a pretentious start. A recent issue of *Advertising Age* carried a two-page advertisement for the publication.... *The New York Times* recently carried an ad for *The American Book Collector*. We haven't seen the magazine, but would like to point out one of the featured articles: "Science Fiction Collecting: Yesterday's Hobby," by Frank M. Robinson. Frank, how could you? And behind our collective back, too!

Ohio University gave a five-day course last September in "Space Travel Problems". How will the human body stand the stresses and strains of space travel? This course endeavored to answer this question, as well as others. It was sponsored jointly by the university and the Medicine Division of the Civil Aeronautics Administration.... Spaceflight faster than light was a wild theory of John W. Campbell and E. E. Smith in the early 30's. But today the Air Force is about to explore a revolutionary theory that a new type of super-atomic energy can be released by making atoms extremely cold instead of extremely hot. Navy Scientist Robert Leon Carroll described his theory as being exactly the opposite of nuclear fusion. Mr. Carrolle states that as an atom

gets colder and colder, its electrons will gravitate toward the nucleus, at the same time moving faster and faster. If the atom becomes cold enough, the electrons will plunge into the nucleus and disintegrate it, releasing the energy of the nucleus. Mr. Carroll challenges the validity of two long accepted concepts: that 459.6 degrees below zero Fahrenheit is absolute zero, and that the velocity of light, 186,300 miles per second, is the fastest speed attainable. And, believe it or not, the Air Force is going to invest \$100,000 into exploring the theory! Who was the first to ask, "Is Science Catching Up With Science Fiction?"

Once around the moon will go Soviet rocket, says Soviet scientist. Moscow radio has reported that Professor Chebotaryov has figured a way of shooting a rocket around the moon and back, using only the fuel required for takeoff! The Professor, a member of the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, says that such a flight will occur within the next five or ten years.

Lethargy apparently grips the group which sponsors each year's World Convention. In the past, this has occurred almost invariably, and, following the New York World Convention, the established pattern exhibited itself again, with the sponsoring New York Science Fiction Circle disintegrating. However, the club has been reorganized by several of the former members, including David A. Kyle and Ruth Landis. One of the new charter members is Allen Glasser, who organized the first science fiction fan club, The Scienceers, back in 1929. Anyone interested in the revitalized New York Group is invited to write to Kyle at 300 W. 67th Street, New York 23, N. Y.

THE FANZINES

WE WERE recently quaffing a few brews with a kindred soul,

Bob Pavlat, when the subject of science fiction fandom was burped up. "How," asked Pavlat, "do people become fans? What subtle and enigmatic force propels them from the profound blissfulness of general readership to the cataclysmic microcosm of fandom?"

Good question, thought we. And we (and he) agreed that letter columns and fanzine review departments were primarily instrumental in initiating the noninitiate. Then the discussion became more specific. Which type of fanzine is the most successful in introducing fandom to Joe Reader? (This subject of self-propagation of fandom is, conceivably, of utmost importance. After all, the fans of yesterday became the writers, editors, and artists of today. Extending this one step further—the fans of today.. (you finish the sentence in ten words or less). Is it the general fanzine (such as *Fantasy Times* and *Inside*) or is it the fan fanzine (such as *A Bas* or *Hypphen*)? Or is the sublime purpose accomplished by the fanzine which is halfway betwixt and between (such as *Grue* and *Canadian Fandom*)?

We would appreciate hearing from any of you who were introduced to fandom through fanzine reviews—whether by this department or any other. And, more specifically, let us know which fanzine, or which type of fanzine, interested you in fandom. And, if possible, the type you prefer today. Now for a few reviews.

GRUE (25¢ a copy from Dean A. Grennell, 402 Maple Avenue, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin). This is the first issue we've seen of this, one of our top favorites, in some time. As usual, the Dean turns out a perfectionist piece of work—50 large perfectly reproduced pages of humor, satire, whimsy and, occasionally, serious constructive stuff. Lt. Dave Jenrette snapped us to attention with the story of his trip—not to a fan convention—but to the home of the late Robert E. Howard, Cross Plains,

Texas. Hyborian Legion members should obtain a copy of this issue, if only for the interesting facts relating the late master of the swash-buckling tale of fantasy.

Of interest to the collector of pulps (and their tribe is increasing daily) is Dean's series of articles, "The Fallen Mighty." Grennell, who is an old reminiscer at heart, discusses in detail the plotforms, writing-style, and type of characters which composed the old single-character magazines, such as *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow* and, as discussed this time, *Captain Satan*. Robert Bloch, Chuck Harris, and Dean Grennell (with his informative "Miscellania") help round out a very pleasing magazine.

VIRGIL FINLAY ... A Portfolio of Illustrations (\$2 from Russell Swanson, 4326 Larchwood Avenue, Phila. 4, Pa.). This is a professionally printed pamphlet containing Virgil Finlay's selection of his fifteen all-time favorites. They are marvelously reproduced—in many cases superior to their original publication. Here is a cross-section of the works of one of fantasy's most superb stylists. Many of the reproductions are of his early work when he was a meticulous and painstaking worker. This is a genuine collector's item.

CONTOUR (10¢ from Bob Pavlat, 6001 43rd Avenue, Hyattsville, Maryland). Editor Pavlat publishes this attractive little magazine via the Gestetner process (a la *Grue*) for several of the amateur press organizations and it is not, essentially, a subscription magazine. However, here is your chance to learn something about that mysterious and exclusive fanzine exchange bureau, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA). In addition, there are quite a few interesting articles—interesting, that is, whether you are an FAPA'er or not. John Berry writes his impressions of the visit paid him and Walt Willis (in Ireland) by Larry Shaw and Lee Hoffman Shaw (*Infinity Science Fic-*

tion). The title of article is quite punny—"Infinite-Tea," which is typical of Irish fandom: invariably they are wont to give forth with a pun at the slightest provocation. In fact, they don't even have to be provoked.

Nelson Griggs tells how, as a representative of the Press, he covered a congressional hearing, which resulted from the complaint of an atheist who maintained he should have equal time to answer a priest who had attacked his lack of religion. As it turned out, no one could be found to agree with the views of our non-religious protestor, with one exception—a Congregationalist minister! This liberal-minded worthy broke up the meeting when he maintained that the atheist was within his rights and, if sincere, should not be denied the right to express freely his views. Congress decided the issue was not controversial and worth of no further consideration.

UMBRA (10¢ per from John Hitchcock, 300 East University Parkway, Baltimore 18, Maryland). The 15th issue is on hand—and a very attractive one. *Umbra* utilizes the Ditto process, which permits many colorful illustrations. When handled adeptly (as in this case) we prefer the deep purple of the Ditto to the best of mimeographing. Andy Young leads off the issue with an article titled, "The Sense of Wonder." (No, Andy Young is not a pseudonym for Sam Moskowitz.) One statement of this rather trenchant analysis we thought quite apropos—Young says that if it depends more and more on mass audience we can expect the sense of wonder to become rarer and rarer. This is quite true. However, the day of the mass audience is over. So look for more and more of the "sense of wonder." Several news and review columns fill the remaining pages. *Umbra* is well-worth the thin dime asked.

Please note new address when sending fanzines: Robert A. Madle, 7720 Oxman Road, Palmer Park, Hyattsville, Maryland.



Time had had its inscrutable way, and the plans of men had gone awry. But now, there was an opportunity no one had even hoped for . . .

SECOND CHANCE

by Irving Cox, Jr.

PAIN, VAGUE and indefinite, like a fire insistent in his veins; pain, dragging him back from the infinitely comfortable abyss of oblivion—

Back to consciousness.

He saw a metal roof curving above his head, it was ridged with girders geometrically rivet-studded, a monotonously hypnotic pattern, like a carpet design. Sluggishly he counted the rivets, as far as he could see them; but he could not turn his head. He felt tired, enormously tired. He wanted to go to sleep again, back to the womb of nothingness, but the pain tugged at his muscles and kept him awake.

Suddenly he knew his name: Todd

Orin. But that wasn't quite all, something else had come first.

Driven by pain, Orin tried to sit up, but tight plastic hands held him rigid on a metal shelf. His throat was dry, as if it were coated with dust.

"Break the capsule sealed inside your mouth." The voice was a whisper within his brain.

Orin obeyed. For a moment the liquid scalded his throat; then his body belt invigorated and freshed, relieved of the torment.

The plastic hands that held him on the shelf snapped open. He tried to sit up, instead, his body shot effortlessly toward the curving roof. Instinctively he held out his hands to prevent a col-

lision with the geometric girders, he hung weightless in the air.

Orin realized abruptly that he was naked. Below him, on a kind of narrow catwalk, were piles of clothing, neatly folded. The uniforms seemed vaguely familiar. He pushed himself down toward the catwalk, past empty metal shelves like the one to which he been bound. But when he picked up a uniform to put it on, it fell apart at the folds; the material turned to dust in his hands.

Twisting in the air, Orin slowly surveyed the metal-walled room. It was a long cylinder lined with tiers of metal shelves. At one end was a circular door.

"You will open the door and power the gyroscope." It was the quiet mind-whisper again. He obeyed without question. It was his duty to obey; anything else was unthinkable.

Two wheels were fixed to the circular door, Orin turned them both. Somewhere in the distance a humming began, spiraling to a high-pitched whine. Orin's feet settled to the catwalk; his body had weight again; the cylindrical room had an up and down.

The door swung open. Orin stooped to enter a small, dark room. For a moment he saw nothing, then the outline of a transparent hemisphere took form. He saw the vast, velvet emptiness of space, blazing with the pinpoint light of a thousand distant suns. The sky-panorama was swinging languidly. The curved segment of a radiant, green globe came into view.

This was their destination! The unknown, unnamed paradise-planet; the new world, predicted by the careful calculations of the scientists. Orin knew it, without understanding why. He was aware of achievement, of the success of a desperate chance taken against untold odds.

He realized, for the first time, that he was in a sky-ship, standing naked in the control room. Blindly, by instinct, he felt for the control console.

He found the lever he remembered. The hemisphere was flooded with light.

And he called the rest of his name. A title: Commander. Commander Todd Orin, this sky-ship was his. From across a great waste of time he heard a voice—thin, trained, very old, "There are no others, Commander; there will be none. Every hope of the human mind, every dream man has ever had—you carry them with you. If you fail us, we are nothing; we have been nothing."

A SHARP picture came into Orin's mind. He remembered standing, clothed in a skin-tight, silver-colored uniform, talking to a stooped old man—an old man wrapped in a threadbare blanket to protect himself from the screaming wind. Below them rose the gleaming bulk of the sky-ship, a gray silhouette against the night. The earth was shattered and torn, shapeless ruins clung to the horizon, like a wall of grinning skulls. Much of the desolation was concealed and subtly softened by a blanket of snow.

"Will we get through the ring?" Orin asked.

"If the light-power cuts in when it should, yes. We've no experimental data to reply on—nothing but the calculations of the mathematicians. We may be sending you to your graves, but, if it's death, it will be quick and Merciful." He glanced out into the night and shivered. "More merciful than ours."

Orin looked toward the ruins. "So much to lose, Dr. Tryne—and so pointlessly!"

"The mind of man, Commander Orin—the intellect: power to build a universe. Nothing could destroy it—nothing but man himself. We are the ultimate of time, at once good and evil, creation and death inseparably joined."

"Without compromise."

Dr. Tryne laughed thinly. "Yes,

without compromise. It's good you can still pun, Commander; it helps to ease the disaster. We tried again today; for the last time. They refuse to see our delegation, in twenty-four hours they will close the ring."

"But it's insane, Dr. Tryne! Don't they know—"

"Insane, of course. That, too, is a characteristic of reason." The old man took Orin's hand; his fingers were trembling. "After you fire the takeoff blast, Orin, wait until you attain 4-G's before you switch on the shelf deaomators. You can't do it any earlier, or you'll kill them all. The counter will automatically tie in the time-power three minutes later. Three minutes, Commander; that's all you have."

"I'll make it, sir."

"We selected you for your strength, for your marked ability to form independent judgments. We've conditioned you physically as thoroughly as we know how. If you can reach your shelf, the binders will activate your deaamator unit. Strip as soon as you go aboard; the metal must be against your skin, remember that; and by all means—"

"We've gone over the instructions so many times, Dr. Tryne!"

The old man twisted his pale hands together. "I know, Orin; I know. But I—I must talk. About something; anything. So much is in your hands!"

From the door of the underground shelter, the chief mathematician gave Orin the blast-off signal. He saluted Dr. Tryne smartly and swung aboard the ship. As the sky-ship lurched in the first shock of the blast, Orin tore off his silvery uniform and threw it beneath the control console.

HE STOOD now, as he had then, naked under the transparent dome. Faintly he saw his reflectioo, distorted by the concave curve. He was a big man, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped. Muscles bulged in his arms

and legs, like ripples in ivory. His skin was colorless; his head hairless, a putty mask for the fear in his dark eyes.

He stooped to pick up the uniform he had discarded so long ago. It turned into dust when he touched it.

Then he saw the little machine fixed to the console and, in a vague way, he recognized it. He examined the machine cautiously.

Tiny wheels, geared in diamonds, were designed to grip a long, sharp-pointed, diamond crystal so that it punched a mark into a metal thread which fed under the drill. The thread had come from an enormous spool above the console; but the spool was empty. Marked thread lay coiled in a basket under the drill.

Orin examined the last piece of thread, which hung over the lip of the basket. The metal was platinum, spun as thin as a spider's silk. At closely spaced intervals the diamond head had folded a V into the metal.

Then he knew what the machine was: Dr. Tryne's clock of the cosmos. Another fragment of Orin's memory fell into place. . . .

He and Dr. Tryne were deep in the underground shelter. Occasionally, even that granite-walled dungeon trembled in the shock from the chaos which flamed on the surface. The doctor had to raise his weary voice in order to make himself heard above the throbbing of the air machines. "Blast-off in two weeks," he said to Orin. "We're going through with it on schedule."

"Have you choseo the others, sir?"

"All but one or two. Nothing can go wrong; nothing. We're sure of that. And yet—and yet there's so much we don't know! We believe you'll reach a speed close to that of light; your destination is not quite a hundred light years away, and the automatics will cut out the light-power when you reach it. But we've keyed the cut-out to time as we measure it. We could have underestimated by billions

of years, or overestimated—by an eternity. What happens to time, at the speed of light? No one knows. Granting that the deanimators make it possible for you to survive, the actual time elapsed is something you'll need to know."

"Time is an arbitrary abstract, a mathematical fiction invented by man for his own convenience."

"And now we mean to impose it on the cosmos." The doctor fumbled beneath his frayed lab coat and took out a blueprint, which he spread on the table in front of Orin.

"It looks like the design for a timer of some sort, sir."

"It is, Orin—a clock for the cosmos, built for the pace of centuries. At each passage of a hundred years, as we measure time, the diamond drill will mark the platinum tape. As eternal a machine—"

"A hundred years! Dr. Tryne, we'll reach our destination in less time than that."

"So we assume; and, if you do, my clock should never click off its first watch. It would be a comforting thing for you to know, in your new world, that the cosmos conforms to our standards. On the other hand—" The old man shrugged. "The clock will be driven by a capsule of radium. Count the notches in the tape, Orin; forty centuries to the inch; five miles of wire on the reel—a yardstick of eternity." . . .

ORIN'S mind reeled with nameless terror as he knelt, naked, beside the timer. The wire had long since been marked and coiled into the basket. He looked at the capsule of radium.

And he found that the unstable element had become lead.

Orin leaned weakly against the console, trying to grasp the significance of such a wasteland of time. Millions of years—billions—untold and uncounted. And now, above the transparent dome, swung the green globe of the

new world, the paradise-planet, the destination for last fragment of mankind.

The last men? How did he know that? Vague memory, tormented and bitter, swam in a nebulous confusion. The past was chaos; the past was death. "We are the ultimate dilemma of time," Dr. Tryne had said, "at once good and evil, creation and death inseparably joined."

It was meaningless; yet it explained everything. Orin had a key to memory, but he could not find the lock it would fit.

As he turned away from the console, from the glitter of the promised world, Orin saw the open door of the cylinder room and for the last time, he heard the whisper, the hypnotic order crying to him across the gulf of eternity. "*The Commander will cut off the deanimators and administer revival capsules to the others. The revival capsules are to be found in—*"

To the others!

Orin sprang toward the circular door of the cylinder, he remembered what he must do. Only the deanimator unit had been tied into the robot-drive. When the sky-ship settled into an orbit around the paradise-planet, the automatics cut out the light power and fed a breathable atmosphere into the cylinder, at the same time breaking Orin's deanimator circuit. Orin had been expected to be able to revive himself, driven by the nagging incentive of post-hypnotic suggestion. Then he would break the union cords on the headplates of the others and force the bitter capsules between their lips.

Orin ran down the catwalk past the tiers of metal shelves empty metal shelves! Two hundred hand-picked men and women, the chosen survivors of mankind; but the shelves were empty, the circuit wires broken.

They were gone. The hope was gone—dust, scattered over the span of eternity.

But the deanimator was foolproof. The plates had not been powered by machines; life-suspension was maintained by the delicate opposition of metals in the shelf plates. Orin had survived; why not the others?

He bent and examined one of the shelves. The body plates were still intact, capable of functioning. But the thin wire which had joined the two pieces of the headplate was broken. At last he understood; his was a disaster of time; the slow and patient erosion of eternity.

AS THE millions of years rolled past, the headplate wires on the deanimator shelves had gradually worn and snapped, one by one. The survivors had awakened—to death, for the preservation cylinder had been empty of oxygen until the automatics cut out the light-power.

Orin's deanimator connection had been made through wires embedded in the broad, plastic shelf straps rather than through the headplates. The difference in design was necessary because his shelf had been in the upper tier, where the headplates were crowded against the control room bulkhead. Only one other shelf in the cylinder—the companion to Orin's, in the opposite tier—had been adapted to the same design.

One other shelf: a second survivor!

Orin found her, a beautiful girl, slim and very young, her shaved head tight against the metal plates, her naked body rigid on the shelf. But he hesitated, with a vague sense of shame, and did not at once break her deanimator connection. The uncertain recollection of a long forgotten code, a fundamental taboo of mankind, held him back.

He must be dressed, he couldn't awaken her until he was. Why the point was important he did not know.

It seemed to be a part of man's essential culture, that heritage of a shapeless past which it was his duty to preserve.

Orin tried, first, to put on the folded uniforms which lay waiting on the catwalk under the empty shelves, but the material was useless. He searched through the rest of the ship; and found nothing he could use.

The sight of each new cubicle—the galley, the medical center, the archive, the airlock—nudged at the fragments of his memory, slowly pushing them into a recognizable pattern.

For a moment, the long chamber at the rear puzzled him. Then he saw the heat-seared scaffolding, and he knew he was in the power room, now exhausted and useless. When the automatics cut out the light-power, the thin cylinders were expelled into space; the power chamber itself would break off as the sky-ship moved down into the atmosphere of the paradise-planet.

The tape reels in the archive stood in the neat rows upon their shelves, thousands upon thousands of them, the accumulated record of man's greatness preserved for the children of the new world. But now the record was worthless, for the plastic had turned brittle and slowly broken away from the reels, pouring a rain of brown dust upon the metal floor.

WITH NOTHING to cover his nakedness, Orin went back to the cylinder and awakened the girl. As the revival capsule broke between her teeth, she pushed herself up from the metal shelf and stared at Orin with glazed eyes. "I am Loyna Durale, mating classification B-6."

He smiled. "And I'm Todd Orin, Commander of the ship. Glad we—"

"I am Loyna Durale, mating classification B-6." She stared at him blankly.

"So you said, you and I dare say it's a fine thing to know, but—"

"I am Loyna Durale." Patiently she reeled off the data again and again. Orin knew she could do nothing else. It was obviously the post-hypnotic

direction given to each of the two hundred earth survivors, Loyna would go on giving him the same information until he responded properly. He stumbled on the correct formula when he said, "Classification noted."

Immediately her body relaxed. Expression came into her puttywhite face and she tried to smile. "Did we make it?"

"In a sense, Loyna; but you see—"

"Where are the others? Am I the last—"

"You'll want to come into the control room and see the new world."

He reached up to help her down from the shelf. As her feet touched the cat-walk, she backed away from him. "We're not dressed!"

Acutely embarrassed, he stirred one of the folded uniforms with his toe. "And not likely to be, I'm afraid."

"But that's wrong. People don't—on the earth—" She was more confused than he was and a faint color tinged her cheeks.

"How much do you remember, Loyna?"

"Nothing—everything. It's all mixed together: the ring, and the cold, and the place underground with the stone walls. And—and the tests! Only two hundred could go to the new world. Another earth." She looked into his eyes. "To begin again, wasn't it?"

"Yes, to give mankind a second chance."

"You said I could see the planet!" She ran through the door into the control room and stood gasping as the green globe swung before the transparent dome. "Like home," she whispered. Then she asked again, "But where is everyone, Commander Orin?"

"The journey took longer than we expected."

"That's no answer! The life-suspension process made it possible for us to live as long—"

"A very long time, Loyna; an unimaginable time." He took her hand and showed her Dr. Tryne's

cosmic clock, gently explaining what it implied.

"Then—then you and I—" She clenched her hands together to keep them from trembling.

"The only survivors."

She drew a long breath. "It's up to us, Commander. We can still complete our mission—two of us, alone."

"I'm not sure, Loyna, for one thing, the records in the archive are gone."

"They would have helped, but knowledge doesn't matter as much as we do ourselves. Part of it is coming back to me, now!" She began to pace the metal floor in front of the console. "It's man himself that we must save—the human mind; rational thought. Because we didn't die with the earth—"

"WHAT HAPPENED to our people? Do you remember that?"

"Death, disaster, horror—only the shadow of the emotion in clear. The important thing, Commander Orin, is that you and I are alive. That was all they asked of us. Survive; settle the new world. Our children and our grandchildren—" She paused and looked at the globe. "Are you sure it duplicates the earth? Is the atmosphere—"

"The automatics cut out the light-power only after a spectrographic analysis indicated a planetary atmosphere like our own."

"That accounts for the time lapse! They sent us to a world not a hundred light years from the earth. The scientists thought they had found a new planet like ours, but they couldn't be sure because—because of the ring. That planet didn't have the proper atmosphere when our ship reached it, and the spectrograph did not cut the light-power circuit. Our ship simply sailed on—century after century, crossing the cosmos at the speed of light—until it brought us here, to a planet where men could live again."

"Yes, the ring," he repeated. "It kept



our rockets grounded, so they couldn't make accurate observations when they set our destination. But what was the ring, Loyna?"

"I don't know. A—a thing; an enemy!" Her eyes glazed with remembered fear. "An enemy who was destroying the earth."

"The only enemy of man is man himself. That explains it; that is the answer I learned long ago. But I don't know what it means! Am I your enemy; are you mine?"

Her voice was lilting, trance-like. "And man destroyed the earth; that I remember. It was not the result of natural phenomenon, but a choice man made, Commander, a decision—"

"Why call me that? The title means nothing now, when only you and I—"

"Two of us; and a new world." She slipped her hand into his and glanced up through the dome. "We haven't failed—Todd! We've fulfilled our purpose; we've accomplished the thing they sent us to do! It isn't important if we don't remember the past. Maybe they meant for us to forget."

"The shadow of the horror is still in our minds—"

"Take us down there, Todd! Down to the new world—to our second chance!"

He pulled out a stool and sat in front of the console. Slowly his hands moved toward the dials, responding to a subconscious memory pattern, a lesson learned long ago: seal the members of the expedition into the forward segment and jettison the rest of the ship;

glide in an elliptical orbit toward the destination planet; at twenty thousand feet use the atmosphere engines.

Orin turned the dials. The sky-ship lurched in a sudden burst of power. The green globe of the new earth began to expand until it filled the panorama of the sky.

"We won't land under rocket power," Orin told Loyna. "They made this ship different from the regular interplanetary rockets because—because—" He shook his head.

"I remember, Todd! We've converted our ship into an airplane, so we can explore the surface and select a desirable landing site!"

AN INCREASING whine of air struck the outstretched wings. Through scattered cloud islands they saw the blue sea and the continental land masses of the new world.

Orin felt Loyna's fingers close upon his naked shoulder. "It looks like—like home," she whispered. "Todd, before the chaos and the terror—before they made the ring—I went to Venus and Mars with my father. He was a mining engineer. When we came home, we would see the earth like this—like this, Todd! With the polar ice caps blazing white in the sun, and the equatorial green—"

"Any planet with an earth atmosphere would have the same general appearance."

Her voice was shrill and tense. "When we approached the earth. I would look down at one of the continents and wonder—and wonder—The enemy was there, Todd; isolated from us with his armies and his weapons!"

"The enemy of man is man himself," he repeated and he began to understand. Orin saw earth as it had been before the catastrophe—the gleaming busy cities; the white, ribbon-like highways curling through fertile hills; and the faces of people, millions of men and women like himself. Now they were

gone, lost in a horror and a madness...

"Madness," Dr. Tryne said. "Of course. Mankind has gone insane. We're gregarious; we have social minds—the minds of creators, builders. We have to live together; we can't survive alone. Yet we split ourselves into warring nations; we use our intellect to devise weapons for self-destruction. Instead of wonderful dreams, we've created a nightmare."

Dr. Tryne sat talking to Orin in an underground shelter, which was shaken monotonously by a ceaseless turmoil of concussion. A single candle stood between them on a flimsy table, and the flame quivered in counterpoint rhythm to the explosions.

"We've wasted our lives and our treasure, Orin," the old man said, "and now with this new weapon—"

"The ring?"

"Our final insanity."

"Sir, it will destroy the earth—everything! What can the enemy possibly gain by using it?"

"Victory, of a sort; he will pull us down with himself. It's the logic of madness."

"Have we tried to contact them—to compromise?"

"The enemy is no longer interested even if we surrender; he knows, now, he can destroy us. Oh, we'll hold off the end for a time—a year, perhaps. The ring can only function when the enemy has encircled the earth with a minimum of forty artificial satellites. We'll knock some of them down, naturally; but they'll always be able to build others."

A particularly violent convulsion shook the earth. The flickering candle winked out. Dr. Tryne lit a match and the flame cast weirdly distorted shadows over his face. "Orin," he said, "man must survive as a species. We've time and material to build one escape rocket. We've chosen you to command it—to build a new world beyond this madness; a world for men!" ...

LOYNA SNATCHED Orin's hand from the controls, her voice cold with terror. "I remember, Todd! The enemy, the ring; everything!"

"A new world," he answered, "without war. Yes, I remember, too, Loyna."

"And we can create it, Todd. We know why we failed before. Our children can learn—"

"Do we, Loyna? We know only that man destroyed himself; not why he did. Dr. Tryne said we were gregarious and could be nothing else. It is our nature to dream and to create in the shape of our dreams. Yet we destroyed ourselves!"

"Then in our new world we must learn how to be what we are, Todd. We shall teach our children to live proudly according to the nature of man. It's as simple as that! We shall not deny the thing which is ourselves, the thing that makes us human."

The meter registered an altitude of twenty thousand feet. Orin turned the dials which would cut in the airplane motors. Nothing happened; the trip spiraled toward the new planet, its wings screaming in the air.

"What's wrong?" Loyna cried.

"I don't know. I think the motors are too badly worn to—"

"Then we're lost, too?"

"No!" He worked desperately with the controls and gradually the ship flattened into a glide. "It may be rough," he said, "but we'll land."

As he fought to keep the ship in an even glide, the checker-board pattern of the paradise-planet slid past beneath them, a swirl of indistinguishable color and form. Green-clad mountain ranges arose from the ground, rimming fertile valleys. It was a good world, Orin thought, fresh and unspoiled—the new earth, and a better earth because here man would have his second chance. The past would become the teacher to the new generations. Here men would learn to live—like men.

Orin swung his arm around Loyna's

naked hips as the ship glided into a broad, treeless valley. The flat, winged ship skimmed against the ground and jolted to a stop. Loyna and Orin were dazed and hrulsed. With an effort he pulled open the shattered cabin door. They stood together looking down upon the gravel of a sunny desert.

"Home," she whispered.

"The new earth." He took her in his arms. "Here it will be different, Loyna."

Suddenly a clattering noise surrounded them. In the swirling cloud of desert dust they saw a swarm of drab vehicles. Men moved toward them—armed men!

"There are people here," Loyna gasped.

"Anybody hurt?" one of the men demanded.

"And they speak our language!"

Orin raised his hand. "Greetings. We have come here from the earth, seeking a new home and—"

THE DRAB-CLAD men began to snicker among themselves. "O.K., huddy, save it for the captain. This is a restricted area."

"No; you must understand! We have come a great distance; we have traveled for an eternity of time. The earth is another planet, a distant star—"

The snickering burst into uproarious laughter. "Cut the comedy and put some clothes on. We'll take you back to the base."

"But I'm telling you the truth!"

"You sure are; welcome home."

They wrapped Loyna and Orin in army blankets and drove them to a low-roofed building at the base of the mountains. Orin tried again to make an explanation, but the men were obviously uninterested. In silence he settled back on the seat beside Loyna. Slowly he accepted the truth. This new world was the old; the paradise-planet was the earth itself.

Why else would the men have spoken his own language? When he examined

their uniforms, Orin recognized them. He had seen similar uniforms pictured in the history tapes.

In the history tapes! And Orin knew the answer.

He and Loyna had traveled the cosmos for an eternity, and time had played its final irony. Time, like space, like the universe, was a curved entity—infinity and nothingness, one shouldering next to the other. Their new world was not untold billions of years in the future, but a century or more in the past.

Alone in a room of the station Loyna and Orin put on the strange, awkward clothing which was given to them. Uncertain of his reasoning, Orin tried to explain his conclusion to Loyna. When she understood, her face glowed with hope. "Then we can give mankind a second chance, Todd!"

"How? Since we knew that this world will one day destroy itself—"

"Because we know it! Don't you see? We can talk to them. We can tell them the truth. We can change history, Todd!"

"By the logic of reason alone?"

"Yes, Todd, by reason alone. True, the only enemy of man is man himself; but that's just half the equation. By the same argument, only man can save himself. The past is inevitable, but not the future. The choice is infinite, Todd, and the choice is ours. We cannot change yesterday, but we can do as we like with tomorrow; the future can be any shape men choose to make it. And now the world will make the right choice."

"You really believe that, Loyna? You think we can prevent—"

"I know it, Todd. Reason can conquer madness; we can teach them the consequences of the wrong choice. In our new tomorrow, men will create dreams—instead of nightmares."

She took his hand with confidence and they walked together to the station office, where the captain was waiting to question them.

Editorial How's That Again?



TIME AND time again, I'd see the phrase, "This is *your* magazine," in editorials and in the editor's comment on readers' letters, back in the day when I was just one of the cash customers. It sounded very nice, until I come across things in the magazine I didn't like.

So I'd write letters in to the editor, making no bones about what I thought were mediocre or downright bad covers, or poor illustrations, or deplorable stories, and so on. And in the letter column, I'd see letters from other readers objecting to the same things. Sometimes the editor would try to pacify me with gentle words to the effect that he couldn't please everyone, and that other readers praised the very things I complained about. Now and then, I'd see letters confirming this contention. At other times, my complaints would be ignored politely, even though my letter of the moment was printed, and other aspects of it commented upon.

So that the next time I read in print about how this was "your mag-

azine, readers", I snorted and wondered which reader was being referred to. It certainly wasn't one Bob Lowndes.

So here's a good question which needs a reasonably good answer. Whose magazine is it that you're reading? You bought this particular copy; you own it. But for whom is this magazine being published? For the steady readers? For people who may just pick it up now and then? For people who write in letters to say what they like or do not like?

Well, let's start at the top. We have the owner of the firm that publishes *Science Fiction Quarterly*. In a very large sense, this is his magazine; he owns all legal rights in it; he invests the money that goes into its production; he stands to profit most if it is successful—and to lose most if the sales go down, down, and still farther down. True, that section of the purchasers who are really happy with the magazine stand to lose, too, in the event that the magazine should die. But there are other science fiction

magazines, and the faithful will still have their files, if they're collectors; the publisher won't have the profits of yesterday if his venture fails today.

This is the publisher's magazine, then—but only in a sense. First of all, he doesn't put it together himself; nor does he publish it merely to read himself. Since he wants to sell his product, it follows that he wants the magazine to satisfy as many people as possible. So he'd be very happy if he knew exactly what a hundred thousand or so readers really wanted to see in SFQ, what would bring forth their continued support.

The trouble is—he doesn't. He only knows, from many years of experience, the *general kind* of things which make a magazine saleable. This comes from statistical averages, and such knowledge is reflected in his general policy in regard to covers, artwork, and contents. The application can be sadly erroneous in a given instance; but the policy has to be generally right—otherwise, the magazine would develop fatal circulation deficiencies.

Appearance is far more important than many people think. A magazine may contain within its covers the finest collection of stories, articles, and departments that you ever dreamed of seeing, but if the packaging is not attractive enough, *in itself*, to make people notice the magazine and pick it up, then the labor that brought forth a superb issue has been mostly in vain. This means not just a "good cover" but the right kind of a "good cover". Readers who were sold in advance may love the wrong kind—but there aren't enough of such readers. If there were, then we wouldn't consider newsstand sales; we'd probably have the book distributed to newsdealers as a convenience—but that is all.

THUS WE get down to the editor, who, if not also art director, has a

good deal to say about covers and artwork. Is SFQ *my* magazine?

To a large extent, it is. It stands to reason that I cannot assume that my judgment is worthless, cannot proceed on the basis that if I think a story poor, then it is just what the readers want—and the more it nauseates me, the better it will go over. On the contrary, I have to assume that my own taste and preference—taste where there's a large selection of desirable items; preference where I must settle for the best available in order to meet deadlines—will more or less dovetail with that of you readers. I know that I can't be right all the time, but have to assume that *I am* right, on any given matter, until proved wrong.

And what would prove me wrong? There are two ways—falling sales and continuous objection from a wide variety of readers; but the drop in sales has to be abnormal, and the objections to specific items have to agree with each other.

But the map presented by readers' response to my efforts not only isn't the territory; it's also merely a jagged fragment of the map, and devilish difficult to decipher.

Who responds? Well, there's the fan-type reader—the one who reads and writes in to a number of publications more or less regularly. His name is familiar; I've seen it in other letter departments. This reader has a bit of savvy that the other kinds of reader do not have; he's likely to be quite adept at letter-writing, too. He may have valuable ideas, and sometimes does.

But he isn't quite reliable as a guide. The fan-type reader is too specialized, even when his current letter pretty much agrees with others in his category. He wants something *new*—and so do the other readers—but doesn't realize that what is stale and hackneyed to him, may be fresh and wonderful to the person who has never come across science fiction before. He

may be impatient with elementary matters in the background of a story, not realizing that the specialized idiom—the patois of science fictionists—the facile phrases which have meaning for him are so much gibberish to others, who haven't soaked up as much background as he has.

In one thing, however, he can be definitely helpful. If he shows me that such and such is not only the same old story he's read many times before, but is presented in the same old way; that everything about it is familiar, then I take warning, if I'm an astute editor. Under these conditions, a story is so hackneyed that it may appear stale even to new readers.

Then we have the steady-reader, from whom I hear frequently; he doesn't give the impression of being a hobbyist. He doesn't have as esoteric desires as the fan-type reader; he's more tolerant, and his complaints are more likely to have general validity.

AND FINALLY, there's the new reader. In general, he's either very hot or very cold. In the former instance, his enthusiasm is uplifting to read, perhaps—but he isn't critical enough to be a guide. He likes just too much. In the latter case, science fiction isn't for him—at least the kind that SFQ is presenting—or he's sold on a different kind and is sore because this magazine doesn't offer what *he* thought was science fiction.

He's also the least-heard-from of the lot.

The other fan-type and steady-reader type of letter-writer could still be very helpful, once I knew what kind of margin to allow for prejudice, if the individual members of that audience agreed with each other. Mostly, they don't.

What, for example, should I make of a letter like the following? (And let me beg Algis Budrys' forgiveness for using him as a guinea pig, but the example is too perfect to hypass.)

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I have considered you as one of the smartest of editors of science fiction and have enjoyed immensely your editorials as a rule.

Now I have a question to ask. In the November issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*, you give 12 pages to what the contents page calls one of the short stories—"Calculated Decision", by one who goes by the name of Algis Budrys. A story? A story of what? A story is supposed to make a little sense of some kind, to interest people—or is it? Is there any kind of meaning, or sense, whatsoever to this so-called story? Or, by some chance, does this story have some wonderful hidden meaning to it that I am far too dumb and immature to get?

The author talks about halftracks and drones, ringwalls and tankdowzers—which might mean something to somebody, but certainly not to an ordinary person like me. But that wouldn't be so bad, even if I didn't understand a lot of his words.

I waded through the 12 pages just to see if it wasn't like all of this author's utter nonsense, vapid, meaningless writings.

Did you read this thing? Did you think anyone would like it? And do they? Or did you just have nothing else to fill up the magazine with?

Budrys is a lot worse than Ray Bradbury, who is bad enough.

In the editorial, you discuss the reasons for the slump in science fiction interest from '53-'55. Well if Budrys is a science fiction writer, then Lord help science fiction.

I will, not be too much surprised to find that there is a person, here or there, who will rate this story as very good; but if I am not badly mistaken, they are very few and far between.

S. F. CAREY, Atlanta, Georgia

Lord knows I've written enough letters of this kind in my day as a letter-writing reader and fan, and perhaps Ayjay has, too. But what does this tell me?

Well, it tells me that Mr. Carey reads and loves science fiction. It tells me that he is hurt and indignant when he reads a story in SFQ which he feels is really bad, and that this is an example of what he dislikes. It tells me that he has a certain amount of confidence in my selection of stories, and that he feels betrayed when he sees an example of what looks like editorial idiocy, such as this.

Now it would be the easiest thing in the world for me to say (as editors

used to say to me), "Well, Mr. Carey, I'm sincerely sorry that this story displeased you so greatly; I hope you'll forgive me and remember that I can't please everyone—although I keep on trying to achieve that impossible goal. Readers like you mean a lot to me—readers who care enough about science fiction in general, about this magazine in particular, and about this editor, to write a scorching letter instead of just dropping me from your reading list forthwith."

This is easy to say, because it's true so far as it goes. But it doesn't go far enough, just as Mr. Carey's letter doesn't go far enough.

Mr. Carey says he thinks that while some persons may have liked "Calculated Decision", they are very few and far between. But he hasn't proved it—and what I need is proof. I need to *know* whether a letter like this, bitterly condemning one type of story, represents one reader, a dozen readers, a hundred readers, a thousand readers, ten thousand readers, or whatever percentage of the readership.

I know, without asking, that the some will agree with this letter. But the question is—do *some* readers agree, or do *most* readers? Are the letters and comments which praised "Calculated Decision", such as Mr. Butterworth's comments in "It Says Here", representative of a majority—or are more readers in agreement with Mr. Carey, and just maintaining disgusted silence.

One reader asks, "Who cares for the 'Tie That Binds'..." Another reader claims that it "could have been written by any 4th grader." On the other hand, I received dozens of letters containing applause for the Macklin series of articles. The same sort of thing applies to innumerable other stories, articles, and departments that have appeared in those pages.

Yes, I read "Calculated Decision"; I enjoyed it and thought the author made a very good point with it—even though the technical details made for slow reading. I assumed that readers who (a) like technical problem stories, (b) like stories with a point to make, would also enjoy this tale. I might have been wrong on both counts.

Still, and as inane as it may sound, this *is* your magazine, Mr. Carey. It's also Mr. Butterworth's magazine. And if all I needed was somehow to derive a formula from the letters received, one which would contain elements that everyone praised, and avoid everything that anyone disliked, life would still be simpler than it is.

Because I'm worried about the feelings of the thousands who don't write in. Where do they stand on stories, articles, or departments which bring forth both loud cheers and boos?

One thing's certain. I won't be accused of bringing out a magazine that no one disagreed with! RAWL

— ★ —





THE STUNNING SCIENCE FICTION CAPER

by
Gerald Macdow

However attractive this theory may appear, gentle reader, take warning: it couldn't possibly be true . . . positively not!

I WALKED into the littered office of *Stunning Science Fiction* and said to the woman who was checking galley proofs behind a battered desk, "All right. Where is he?"

She ignored me.
Completely.

"Cut the clowning, sweetheart," I said. "Either trot him out or tell me where the body's buried."

"Look here, Noisy," she said, throwing the galley proofs to a neighboring desk and fumbling in a battered pack for a cigaret, "I can't waste time with every whack that wanders in here."

"Sister," I said, grinning with my teeth, but not my eyes, "I am not a whack. I am, in fact, a bona fide private eye and, as the man says, I just want to get the facts."

"Huh," she said, "you got a haircut."

I flamed the end of her cigaret with

my Zippo and smelled the face-powder stench from the butt.

"So what?" I grated.

"That means you're not a fan," she said. She blew a talcumscented cloud of smoke in my face.

"Fan, schman," I said. "Where's Jonas MacLeb?"

"He never comes in on Tuesdays."

"Today is Wednesday," I said.

"Gregorian calendar," she snorted.

I debated letting her have one in the chops.

The doorknob rattled behind me, and a wild-eyed guy who could use a haircut stuck his head in the room and yelled, "Beat it, May, there's a dick looking for MacLeb."

"Next time, take the train," I cracked as I grabbed a handful of collar and windpipe and pulled him through the door.

"Ulp!" he said.

"Likewise, I'm sure," I said.

"Beat it or I'll call the cops," the woman named May hissed.

"You do that," I said.

The longhair licked his lips and said, "He's got you there, May."

"Shut up, Randy." She threw him a cynic look.

"Whaddya do?" I demanded. "Dissolve the body in acid."

"Hell, no," Randy said. "There wasn't any body."

MAY GROUND her cigaret into a petri dish that doubled as an ash tray and said, "What makes you think MacLeb's dead?"

"Nobody's seen him since the New-yorcon, this Labor Day."

"So...?"

"So my client wants to know what he did with that manuscript—the one he took at the convention, and said he was gonna buy for three cents a word."

"How many words?" Randy asked. He looked bleached.

"Ten thousand," I said.

Randy began to write a check.

"Hush money?" I asked. "No, thanks."

"Take your dough and get out," May said.

"To the police?"

"For God's sake," Randy whispered. "May, we'd better level."

"You're out of your mind."

"Suit yourself, sweetheart." I turned to the door. "I'll be back with the boys in blue."

"O. K.," May said, producing a wicked little automatic, "we'll cut this caper short."

Randy let out a bleat of fear and circled around behind May.

"So, you did bump him?"

"Oh, no, no, no," Randy sobbed. "There's no such person as MacLeb."

"Don't kid me," I said. "I checked, he's been editing this magazine for fifteen years—ever since he got his Masters from R. P. I., in fact."

"Pretty wise," May snarled, waving the gun. In her excitement, she must have pulled the trigger. The top flew

up and a paper snake jumped out at me.

All at once, she looked as if she were going to start bawling. Randy sank weakly into a battered chair.

"All right," May said, "I'll sing."

"Like the bird," I said. "Like the proverbial bird."

"We made him up," she confessed.

"That's right," Randy said, tears making dirty streaks down his cheeks. "All these years," he sobbed. "It's been horrible."

"Competition was rough in the thirties," May went on. "We figured, some mags have house writers... you know... a phoney name several writers used, only the name was the property of the magazine."

"So why not a house editor?" Randy sniffled.

"So we invented this guy with all sorts of scientific qualifications, and a degree, and..."

"Jonas M. MacLeb just a figment?" I snorted, "that's one for TeeVee."

"It's the truth," she said. "We made him up out of whole cloth."

"What about those editorials?" I said. "The hotshot ones about the philosophy of science, and empiricism, and the rest?"

"We hired an IBM machine to turn them out."

"You mean to say...?"

"Yes," Randy confirmed, "Jonas M. MacLeb, the colossus of modern science fiction, is nothing but our imagination plus an IBM semantic analyzer."

"But we're trapped now," May said wearily. "He can't drop out of sight now, because everybody would wonder. They even know what he looks like by now; how he thinks; what his idiosyncracies are..."

"I'm scared," Randy said. "Sometimes, when I walk through Times Square, I think I see him. Real tall—with that sandy crewcut hair and glasses. He always looks like he's thinking, thinking, thinking..."

Randy hit his lip. I saw the pitch. "And you even went to the point of hiring an actor to play the part of MacLeh at conventions?"

"We haven't," May said.

"He just started showing up," Randy sobbed.

"Everybody's seen him but us," May said, her voice hysterical. "Don't you see? Now they all believe in him."

"We've created a monster," Randy said.

At that moment, the door opened behind me. I turned as the tall man with the sandy crewcut hair and glasses said, "Sorry I'm late, May. Let's get to work on that next issue."

May's scream nearly deafened me.



Readin' and Writhin'

[Continued From Page 16]

Wonder", in the essay on Bradbury. But in my copy, in every other copy that I have seen, and apparently in the copy that Knight proof-read, these three are listed in relation to Bradbury's *choice of subject matter*; in that sense alone, Knight sees Bradbury as their heir. Knight was not discussing style at all in this paragraph.

SECOND, the critic must have thorough knowledge and understanding of the field or section of literature he is criticising. There have been numerous judgments of science fiction by critics who were worth paying attention to when they wrote about their specialties. And the fact is that some of these painful statements have been neither irrelevant nor false, so far as they went; on the larger scale, however, lack of thorough acquaintance and comprehension resulted in a falsified portrayal, a part truth which lent plausibility to over-all misinformation.

Third, there must be a feeling on the critic's part that the field he is studying is worth his while. This does *not* necessarily mean that he must believe with all his heart and soul that science fiction is, in itself, great literature—that, therefore, even the worst of science fiction must somehow be very fine and good, for reasons the critic thereupon invents to suit the occasion. It does mean that he cannot operate

under a basic conviction that science fiction is all trash; many so-called "critics" proceed from this base, but they are not operating as critics at such times—they are rather grinding personal axes.

Finally, the critic must have a general foundation in literature outside of science fiction. Sam Moskowitz's remark that any alleged critic who thought that Bradbury's style was influenced by Morley, Nathan, and Sellinger was probably style-deaf (and thereby crippled as a critic) was a perfectly valid proposition. The proposition is true; application of the proposition to Damon Knight is false.

On all four of the above prerequisites, Knight passes with honor. In addition, he has a fascinating style of his own, and he starts off with giving a clear statement of the standards by which he has judged science fiction itself and the examples of science fiction treated in the book.

"In Search of Wonder" cannot be recommended too highly; and do not be misled by the low page count; those are closely-filled pages, and I found the type entirely readable. Things being what they are, it may be a long time before we have another survey of this nature; let us therefore give thanks to Earl Kemp and his associates at Advent: Publishers. Better

[Turn To Page 92]



TEMPERED PROPHECY

Dear Bob:

I must be mellowing with age. After reading three of your recent editorials I can find almost nothing to disagree with in them. I am, in fact, moved to the grudging admission that you write the best editorials in the business. (I grudgingly admit it because it's so obvious.)

A few observations however:

There is a story that replies to those who think science fiction should rise above unpleasant facts, to be moral in spite of the amorality of nature, science and reason. My memory is infamous enough in Fandom that you won't be surprised to learn I can't remember the title or author but it appeared in one of the first few issues of *Galaxy*. On the surface, it was a *Saturday Evening Post* kind of tale about some folksy, foxy characters who resist the analysis by analog that their little town must be erased or else bring economic ruin to the planet colony of Venus. They successfully resist the unfeeling mechanical decision—and,

of course, bring economic ruin to Venus.

I am inclined to think the term "prophetic" should be tempered when applied to science-fiction. It seems to me that science-fiction—and purest SF at that—can also be deliberately *speculative* without the intention of phophecy. As a matter of fact, I don't think John Campbell was *predicting* that a protean monster would land in the arctic. He was *speculating* what would happen *if* one did.

In regard to the general attitude of mainstream critics and authors to science-fiction, I stumbled onto something in private correspondence that Bob Bloch said was the best analysis and approach he had heard. Allowing for Bob's innate generosity, I pass it on. It seems to me that the mainstream critic—and the inbred critic as well—should be *neighborly* in his criticism of SF, not, especially, negatively destructive. Mainstream and SF aren't the same; they don't have the same aims and purposes. But SF is closer to noncategorical literature

than any other story form. When you consider that 90% of the "literate" population read nothing but *Reader's Digest*, *Confidential*, and *True Confessions*, the proximity of science-fiction and general literature in a sea of trash becomes apparent. The word Bob liked was: Neighborly. He said he had been looking for it for some time.

I'll take a qualified exception to one statement of yours—qualified because of my lack of qualification. I don't know much about magazine westerns—I've only read a half dozen magazine stories and a couple of books by Luke Short, through Redd Boggs' recommendation. (Incidentally, I recently wrote you that I considered myself vastly superior to the authors you used in your Western books. I still think I'm a competent writer but the distance is no longer so vast. I'm afraid I was thinking of books put out by Erisman and Atlas, not Lowndes and Columbia—some of the stories in the former are absolutely amateurish. I apologize.)

You say magazine stories of the West are superior to the movies. Well, the Autry-Rogers-Mack Brown "B" picture is no longer made. The low budget western these days is usually a conscientiously made United Artists film. Most Hollywood westerns, I find, are well-written with psychological motivation and historical accuracy. You're the expert—I'll take your word—but in my skimming I have never come across magazine stories to match such recent run-of-the-mill western movies as "Jubal", "The Fastest Gun Alive" and "Seven Men From Now" much less "The Searchers", "Shane" or "High Noon"—although I understand the last was made from a pulp magazine short.

It seems to me mere saturation has something to do with how much science fiction is sold. A large number of magazines by their presence alone will raise the overall sales of their field—although they may force individual sales down. It's a matter of

availability, (singular and repetitive) and self-advertising. Every SF magazine cover is a poster advertising SF. And the book trade learned long ago that some people will buy anything, and anything will be bought by some people.

Hugo Gernsback's stated purpose was education through science fiction. A doctor who sugar-coats his pills doesn't give much thought to the fact that he may be giving his patients the erroneous impression that codine tastes like peppermint. So long as Dr. Keller informed his readership about insect culture, it was immaterial that he violated the square-cube law in increasing their size. Besides, Sloane and Gernsback must have had some story sense and "The Human Termites" for instance is one of the most intriguing and charming of the early serials. (Giant insects must be a nightmare of the racial mind—it's too frequent in all literature for anything else!)

The best thing in the current issues of *SFS*, *SFQ* and *Future* (aside from the fine feature material) is Randy and Bob's "Deus Ex Machina".

JIM HARMON, Mt. Carmel, Illinois.

See the editorial in our May issue of Science Fiction Stories, for discussion of "prophetic" science fiction. And you may congratulate (or blame, as the case may be) yourself for spurring it on. Nor is this all: I found that what I wanted to say about "destructive" criticism, etc., required an essay, so watch for it in Issue Number 32 of Future Science Fiction.

With the ratio of good and bad western movies vs. good and bad western fiction in pulp magazines, I was thinking of the product over the course of a decade or two, rather than the latest trends.

The sugar-coated pill analogy you cite doesn't seem to compare very well, since there is such a vast difference in proclaimed intent between the doctor in question and an editor who

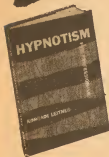
[Turn To Page 80]

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avers that he is educating the public. Story sense is another matter entirely, as the quality of the story, *per se*, wasn't being considered in this framework. But just as a worthy soul can fall from grace without becoming degraded, and thus present an example which most others could not safely follow (for more have been thoroughly corrupted by vice than have managed to indulge without permanent damage), a really good science-fiction story containing flagrant errors alongside accurate scientific information, and sound speculation, sets an example which others follow to science fiction's grief. The person who wrote sheer nonsense about giant ants, pointing to Keller as justification, usually had nothing more than nonsense to offer.

DOWN WITH SPACE OPERA

Dear Editor:

Having been an s-f fan for over twenty years off and on, it may seem strange that I have never before written a letter to any mag yet. However, I have been catching up on my reading of late (I am just finishing your issues for 1955 so it is much too late

for comment on any particular story.) and I find that no matter what publication I pick up, space-opera seems to top all other stories in quantity. Little boys just can't seem to stop playing with their guns, can they?

Many of the newer writers appeal to me, and right at this point I must admit that fantasy is my game. (Writer's note: Readers can be certain now that a woman wrote this, dreamer that she is!) Scientific data has to be very clearly explained, but in a story that has a definite point to make, I will wade through this as if I had a degree.

I believe that all publications are interested in the type of story their readers will enjoy, else there is no point in publishing. It is about time, I believe, that it was pounded home to them (and in saying this, I hope I am not being facetious) that s-f readers beyond the ages of 12-25 are above the average in intelligence, and enjoy an above-average publication.

Just because yours is a pulp magazine, please don't ever acquire an inferiority complex, and feel that space opera is every man's meat. I have tried innumerable times to keep an

[Turn To Page 82]

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open mind when I buy a magazine, and find that such stories make up the bulk but, so help me, while Buck Rogers was my hero up to age 15, I have long since outgrown my worship for him.

Your other readers, I have noted from time to time, have asked where the sense of wonder has gone. Theodore Sturgeon's "Baby Is Three" could, until this moment make me put the book aside and actually think, contemplate and, yes, wonder at the complexities of the human mind. A magazine with his name on it automatically finds its way into my library; and it goes without saying that I have sometimes been disappointed. But in "Baby Is Three," there is a gripping story that does not have death-rays clutched in the hands in some tall, blond, bandsome and 160 IQ'ish brute bent on destroying some monster, whose race will inevitably conquer Earth unless our hero, and he alone, blasts his way into the nebula.

Sheckley is one of the newer writers who has never failed, up to this point, to capture my imagination and hold it. I have been pushing s-f (and with these initials, I include science fantasy) for the past few years; and, believe me, I have been looked upon at times as if it were heroin I were carrying. Friends have glared at me and said, "With all of the trouble going on in the world today, why should we be interested in what could be going on on Venus, Mars, or any planet out of our own galaxy—or, for that matter, what might happen at any future date? We have our own troubles." But then I flash a story of Sheckley's at them and say, "Just give it a chance, and see if you don't like it."

For the first story or two, they will call me and ask for an explanation of the twist ending; but after a bit, they get the gist of it and are sold. I don't know how to sell them on science-fiction because, in many cases, I am

[Turn To Page 84]

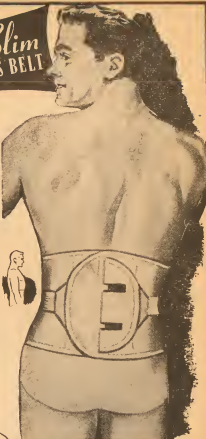
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not sold on it myself, strictly because of the Cowboy-and-Indian techniques employed to fill up pages.

Do men (and I use the word loosely) still actually find amusement in this type of story? Are they going back twenty years, and putting themselves in the place of the hero who can outwit his enemies twenty times a day, and still find time to sit up half the night with one of his old professors who is working on a serum which will rid the world of all its oldest diseases? Come on, fellows—your editors are the ones who have first say on what goes into your publication. It is not so vicious a circle as you might think. If a story, or series of stories, is published, you will get the readers' comments, good, bad or indifferent, space-opera, fan-

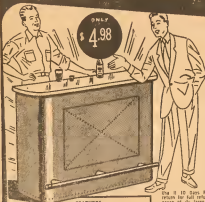
tasy, et al. Why not try cutting out with just one issue that is entirely plausible, and at least makes the reader feel that *all* of these stories are not aimed at the 12-year-old average American mind, like a TV commercial. Even these are getting away from that tack.

An added note: I remember Bob Madle when he was a freshman in high school here in Philly. He is about two years older than I, and, of course, at that time, I thought anything that boys did was silly. I humbly bow my head to his foresight; he and his friends first brought s-f to my attention and I will be eternally grateful!

PEG STANLEY

[Turn To Page 86]

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JANUARY 2-31

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY.

The term "space opera" is so widely used that it is sometimes difficult to decide what is meant by it, except that the label is intended as abuse. Take van Lhin's "Police Your Planet", for example. The novel is jammed with action and physical violence, and is written in something of a tough-guy style. Yet, what do we really find here? First, the depiction of a believable situation, given the stated circumstances, worked out in a believable manner; second, a central character with a credible attitude, derived from types of experience that have been familiar throughout history; third, subordinate characters also handled with credibility and understanding; fourth, a logical solution to the specific problems, and plausible changes of attitude in the central and other characters. Not a single scene in the story takes place in space, nor is space of any real importance as motivation in the story.

Granted that most of the examples you'd point to when you said "space opera" are juvenile, is it necessarily so all the time? One thinks most often of the "invasion" or "vast interstellar war" stories—but what about adventure and exploration, a theme often found in literary classics? A recent example of good adventure, which I'd class as space-opera, without abuse, is Poul Anderson's "Star Ways". Would this come under your strictures?

ON PARMENIDES

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This letter is prompted by a remark of Don Dixon in the letter column of your November issue. "I think Parmenides proffered rather nervously the idea that there is no such thing as change or progress. Well, the law of averages says there must be a lot of people like Curtis around, and maybe Parmenides wasn't a nut."

(1) Parmenides didn't proffer anything nervously. He was capable of

[Turn To Page 88]

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—M.B.C., Ardmore, Pa.

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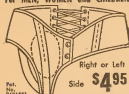
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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

convincing Zeno and founding a school which lasted long afterwards.

(2) His idea was not "that there is no such thing as change or progress." Parmenides believed that motion is an illusion which is another subject altogether. It also made him the first Idealist.

(3) Parmenides was not a "nut." As a matter of fact, he was accused of having shown the absurd conclusions to which strict logic will bring us.

Outside of that, I like your magazine and science-fiction generally. I also like letter columns, editorials and articles. I don't believe in ESP, but I do believe in the possibility of instantaneously traveling through any amount of space.

DONALD E. CORDER.

SURVEY

Dear RWL:

First of all, thanks for the free publicity in SFQ. I might add that this is the first time I've won something for not knowing what I was talking about. (To be perfectly truthful, this is about the first time I've won anything.)

Say, has demon knight left your mags for *Infinity*? You haven't had any of his book reviews since August SFQ. This is a horrible lack.

Well, now that I've covered these points, I'll go ahead and list your best stories of the year. (I'm looking at the January issue now and I would like to see *Science Fiction Stories* go monthly and run serials. By all means.)

Future Science Fiction has had an average year this time around (glad to hear that it's going on a regular schedule again) and has two stories which I think are worth noting: "Vulcan's Hammer" (Dick) and "Day of the Bommer Dukes" (Pohl). The artwork in *Future*, this year, has been awful—especially the covers.

SFQ: Although some people may disagree, I think that Algis Budrys'

[Turn To Page 90]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

"Why Should I Stop?" is not science fiction; indeed, it isn't even fiction. In order to satisfy Budrys' admirers (including Budrys and myself) however, I am including his "Calculated Decision" in the best of the year in this magazine. Also good was "The Time-Lockers" (West). And that's about it.

Science Fiction Stories, on the other hand, has been very good this past year. What with more pages, really long novels, Garrett's parodies, Clifford D. Simak, and other things of that sort, it should be even better in 1957. Best stories of the year are: "The Non-Statistical Man" (Jones), "Galactic Chest" (Simak), "Artwork" (Blish), "Saboteur" (Garrett), and "Tools of the Trade" (Crandall—their best of the year).

If Dikty or Miss Merrill are reading this, there you are; just take your nick.

JOHN BUTTERWORTH,
Belmont, Mass.

"Why Should I Stop?", I would say, was fiction but not in the usual sense, being more of an allegory or a fable. Yet, it was entirely fictitious, even the correspondence between author and editor at the end. And since it deals very largely with an invention, and the effects of same upon characters in the tale, and upon society in general—an invention which also seems to be theoretically possible—it struck me that this is surely science-fiction in the allegorical sense. The author had a point and made it, to my mind; he also had some scientific speculation to make, and made it, I thought.

But was it any good? The fact that I used it testifies that I believed it was, but only reader response could prove or impeach my judgment in this instance. If good, how good? Again, the answer must be indeterminate, though we would have some way of assessing an answer, if the data were available to us. For in this story, the author's intent was very definitely to

[Turn To Page 92]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

"say" something. Now if he said it, and if what he said struck various readers as having been said well and worth saying, then the answer is "good story", regardless how few (relatively) were so impressed. If, on the other hand, the only response was that, yes, he said something, but it wasn't much of anything; wasn't worth the trouble; has all been said far more pointedly before, etc., then the answer comes out "bad story".

[Turn To Page 94]



Readin' and Writin'
 (continued from page 76)

still, send him money for your copy.

Like Anthony Boucher, who wrote the forward to this volume, I do not always agree with Knight's judgments, and, at times, I get the feeling that he has misread somewhere. No matter. I have exactly the same feeling toward all the other critics—genuine critics—elsewhere whose over-all findings I respect. And, as with Moskowitz's proposition, it is always possible to agree with a critic's basic contention even where you cannot accept his particular application of them at the moment, even where he's momentarily made an ass of himself. After all, doesn't everyone,

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY SOMETHING SAID

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Letter after reading the Feb. 1957 issue: Without going into detail, I thought the whole issue was good. Not the best you have done, but good. In fact, I like the magazine well enough to buy every one, even if I have to hunt for it on the newsstand—and what more can one reader do? As to the poll, if you go monthly I will still buy them all; and I would like to see book-lengthers if they are worth reading.

May I also cast the loudest possible vote for your readers' letters column. As long as you print those that say something, I like to read them: For instance, the letter from John A. Turner and the replies to it. All of us hold fixed opinions on some subjects, notably religion and politics, and those opinions vary widely. Even if we do read stories that attack our points of view deliberately, it seems to me we should take them in our stride. If a criticism of various branches of Christianity is going to disturb us, what do we do about the millions of non-Christians who may actually hate us for our beliefs?

Definitions are devilish difficult in the fields of SF and Fantasy. I think that in the latter, anything goes. But in SF, my only criterion is whether or not the story violates an actual known law of physics, in which case I think it belongs in the comic-book class. Of course, it is not the function of SF to teach science; but don't you think well-written SF will do so?

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine printed a story last summer that was a lulu. The criminal gave up and threw down his pistol because the .38 special cartridges he had would not fit his .357 Magnum pistol. Gun fans know that they would fit perfectly well, though the reverse would not be true. In that case, a scientific error destroyed the whole point of an otherwise well-written story. An long as

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

you keep clear of that sort of thing, I am reasonably easy to please.

Now, I have a suggestion to offer your readers that I am sure will add to their pleasure. The following will make it clear: Some time ago I wrote to an Englishman, whose name and address appeared in a letter to one of the SF magazines. For over a year we have been corresponding and exchanging magazines. I have added to my knowledge and understanding of England, and have made the acquaintance of many British magazines—SF and other kinds. All magazines are expensive in England and it gives one quite a lift to give pleasure to another at so little expense. Like myself, many people hate to throw reading matter away if a place can be found for it. I'm sure a letter to *Authentic*, *Nebula*, or one of the others would result in a pleasant contact.

I would very much like to see an article—or at least a discussion—in the magazine on the origin of Man. It is my personal feeling that the Biblical account is so highly allegorical as to be difficult to understand; and I feel that there is too little real evidence for the popular evolutionary theory to fit. Some of your readers must have some very good ideas on the subject, and I think it would make a good subject for some exchange of thoughts.

F. W. ZWICKY, Rockford, Illinois

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Dear Mr. Lowndes:

After finishing the February issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*, I have come to this decision; SFQ, considering all the other science fiction magazines on the market, comes as close to the science fiction fan's heart as any professional magazine can come, without sinking into a cesspool of immaturity. Facts to support this contention are given herewith:

- 1) The pulp size format, that auto-
[Turn To Page 98]

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